Kashmiri Pandits:

Looking to the Future

KASHMIR EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SCIENCE SOCIETY (REGD.)
NEW DELHI-48

Thousands of pages have been written about the tragic exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the enchanted vale which has been their home for millennia.

This book is different. It calls upon Kashmiri Pandits to stop wailing and beating their breasts, so to look ahead to the new challenges and opportunities that a life outside Kashmir has to offer.

Kashmiris have an ancient and glorious tradition of spiritual and intellectual genius. There have been world renowned figures like Kalhana and Abhinavagupta, Nehru and Sapru, Lal Ded and Lakshmanjoo. Kashmir Shaivism is possibility the most systematic and scientific attempt to probe the heights of spirituality and mysticism. In a world torn by violence and strife, it offers a philosophy of living that is at once rational and supra-rational, which offers the most practical approach to experimented with the deepest truths of eastern mysticism in our daily lives.

These and other related issues were debated in a National Seminar on "Kashmiri Pandits: Looking Ahead" organized by the Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society (KECSS) at Pamposh Enclave, New Delhi on 12th March, 2000. This book is based on the proceedings of that Seminar. It is a clarion call to Kashmiri Pandits, asking them to see themselves in a new role where they spread the gospel of pratyabhijnya (recognition), in order to bring peace and enlightenment to the world.

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KASHMIR EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SCIENCE SOCIETY
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KASHMIRI PANDITS : LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

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Preface

This book represents the proceedings of a national seminar held on 12 March, 2000 by Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society (KECSS), Pamposh Enclave, New Delhi. The Executive Committee of KECSS and its President Mr. M.K. Kaw, who is also currently the Education Secretary to the Government of India, had agreed to hold such a seminar on "Kashmiri Pandits : Looking Ahead" with a view to look towards the future with hope and overcome the trauma of forced exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from their homeland in Kashmir in recent years. It is a sad part of contemporary history that Kashmiri Pandits who are the original inhabitants of Kashmir, who have produced some great saints and sages, who have given to the world such noble philosopher-statesmen like Jawaharlal Nehru, are not safe to live in their home in Kashmir. The terrorist forces operating in the valley organized from across the borders of Kashmir have wrought havoc to this dreamland where utter harmony prevailed between all communities only a decade ago.

Therefore, KECSS felt that a seminar to study and analyse some parts of Kashmiri Pandit cultural heritage was needed. Besides, in spite of the tragedy mentioned above, Kashmiri Pandits have to create some direction for life and look for progress based on the blessings of our great ancestors and on our inborn qualities to withstand these trials and tribulations of the present times. The world at large does not know who the Kashmiri Pandits are. Their place in the making of a world order of peace is assured. Many studies have been made in USA and other parts of the world on Kashmiri Pandit heritage, which is the true ancient heritage of Kashmir. For example, Harvard University in USA

has made an important study. Prof. Paul Muller from the United States has dealt extensively on the cosmic aspects of Shaivism and found parallels in the field of physics. The KECSS hopes that in the years ahead it is able to interpret and unearth a large part of Kashmiri Pandit heritage which will open new doors to the understanding of science and universe and about the Reality of which the scientists dream about. Abinava-gupta, whom Muller describes as one of the greatest geniuses India has produced, is being studied in the light of modern science philosophy. Lal Ded, Bhagwan Gopi Nath and many other saints have enriched the world with great wisdom which the whole of mankind needs to share.

It is hoped that this book will inspire many scholars to study more of the cultural heritage of Kashmiri Pandits. The chapters in this book represent various facets of the cultural, spiritual and other aspects of life of this outstanding community.

We are grateful to various scholars who have presented papers at the seminar which are included in this volume. Some more chapters have been added from writers who submitted their papers after the seminar. A few more additions have been made to represent more aspects on Kashmiri Pandits heritage. It is our hope that the book will be of interest to readers the world over, and to Kashmiri community in particular.

The views expressed by authors are their own and do not represent the opinion of the editors or the KECSS. Whereas all care has been taken to avoid mistakes, the editors are not responsible for any errors and omissions. We are thankful to Professor Sudhir Sopori, Mr. S.N. Kaul Reazi, Professor S. Bhatt and Mr. Wattal of Chinar Carpets who all donated Rs. 5,000 each towards the expenses of this seminar.

The editors wish to record the noble services rendered by all participants from KECSS, Kashmiri Samiti, AIKS and scholars from Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University. We are particularly thankful to Mr. A.K. Jalla, the Treasurer, Mr. M. L. Kachru and Mr. H.N. Nehru, the General Secretary and the Secretary of KECSS for their efforts for the success of the seminar. Above all, the seminar was a spontaneous gathering of different

members of Kashmiri Pandit Society who came to ponder over together on the future shape of things for themselves and for their community in the 21st century.

October 2, 2000 **Editors**

Contents

PART IV - PRESENTATION PAPERS : THE POLITICAL ASPECTS INVOLVED

PART V - PRESENTATION PAPERS : THE FUTURE OF KASHMIRI PANDITS

PART VI - THEY OPEN FORUM AND THE SEMINAR CONCLUSION

PART - I

INAUGURAL SESSION

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

*Prof. S. Bhatt**

We are at the end of the twentieth century and the threshold of the twenty-first. Future studies have been undertaken all over the world by various societies and the governments. Future planning is possible after analysis of past trends and future needs of the society. The Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society (KECSS) located at Pamposh Enclave, New Delhi also decided to hold a national seminar on the future of Kashmiri Pandits. There have been many compelling circumstances for this community to make an appraisal of its future prospects. In recent decade or so, militant forces have thrown out Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley. Their homes are burnt. Many Pandits have been killed. There has been almost a total ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir by fundamentalist forces of terrorism organised and supported from Pakistan.

Thus the Pandits who are the original inhabitants of Kashmir live outside Kashmir valley and seek solace in their heritage. They derive hope from their saints and sages for their survival and future life. The Government in the State of Jammu and Kashmir or the Centre, as also the international community, have not done anything tangible to resettle this unfortunate population, back in

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Kashmir.

The seminar held by KECSS cannot possibly ignore the sufferings of Kashmiri Pandits. Yet, in a brave world there is no choice but to stand up for survival. The participants of the seminar therefore decided to draw the best out of this unfortunate community living in adverse circumstances and plan for life and progress for future decades.

Many scholars from various disciplines among Kashmiri Pandits presented their views in order to give a comprehensive view of future life for Kashmiri Pandits. In a way the seminar introduced a global reform movement for this community based on certain common values and needs. Scholars in this book have written on Kashmir's ancient history, anthropology, monuments, festivals, language, literature, folk songs and tales, music and about sages and saints. The reform movement among Kashmiri Pandits seeks, among other things, the revival of cultural heritage of Kashmir based on harmony, peace and common spirituality of mankind, creation of new centres of excellence in Kashmir and in many parts of world for propagation of culture, science and education of Kashmir, help for the downtrodden and refugees from Kashmir, developing new and old population centres in Kashmir and outside, and promoting global peace and harmony.

The chapters in this volume reflect generally the culture and spirit of Kashmiri Pandits. While planning for future, this community needs to carry forward its heritage of centuries from Kashmir, its language, ethos and history. Future studies on Kashmir will surely unravel the many mysteries and knowledge contained in the scriptures. Modern scientists see a parallel between this knowledge and latter day science philosophy. Our readers may refer to some books like Gerold Holton's (1973) "Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought from Kepler to Einstein". The fourteenth (1969) Noble Symposium Proceedings with the title "The Place of Value in A World of Facts" in which C.H. Waddington writes on the biological ways of thought. Prof. Illiya Pregogine's book "Order out of Chaos", and his other books. Prof. Prigogine has great fascination about the Indian philosophy. He has described Jawaharlal Nehru as the "Prime Minister of tomorrow", in his Jawaharlal Nehru memorial lecture 1983 on "Nehru and Einstein".

All these treatises contain knowledge akin to Kashmir's spiritual philosophy of Shaivism and other literary fields. Modern science is likely to explore and synthesize the ideas and truths from the knowledge available in Kashmir's ancient literature.

While looking to the future, Kashmiri Pandits are reminded of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who attached much importance to future planing. He once told the Indian Parliament on 14th March, 1951 as follows : "There is another thing I should like the House to think about : shall we not also think of our tomorrow, sometimes? Or, must we invariably lose ourselves in our todays? I must confess to you that tomorrow is slightly more important to me than today. If we are thinking in terms of progress, we have to build for a tomorrow that will make progress possible."[1]

We are reminded of this great man who reflects largely the Kashmiri Pandit heritage. His focus in life was on the following directions; an open-minded approach; a faith through life; the pursuit of progress based on creativity; productiveness; the sincerity of purpose; the progress of human spirit; the synthesis in our tradition; a new perspective of history based on peace and harmony; and the importance of tomorrow, *et al*.[2]

Therefore, in spite of the global diaspora, and the near total loss of our homes and moorings from Kashmir, the KECSS and its Executive Committee headed by Mr. M. K. Kaw decided to call our community members to look to the future with hope so that new progress and creativity can be organised in the decades ahead. The world community holds Kashmiri Pandits in great respect and is aware of their distress and dire needs of their resettlement in Kashmir. This society of Kashmiri Pandits comprise of scientists, intellectuals, sages and seers who have much to contribute to the mankind in the 21st century. People in many parts of the world are aware of their rich cultural heritage and brilliant intellect and spirits.

Hence this seminar provided an opportunity for this community to think positively. We have a need to hope because, we stand for common and peaceful living between different cultures. Modern scientists and ecologists recommend that it is imperative for mankind to live a multi-cultural and multi-racial

life. Our planet's diversity is based on nature's planning. Global environmental planning is often structured on interdependence of states and people. US President Bill Clinton, for instance, while on his visit to India in the year 2000, stressed the merits of multi-cultural life in modern world. He was fascinated to see the harmony and diversity of cultures of India. Kashmir's social life has always been a product of common cultures of Hindus and Muslims, also called Kashmiriat. The fundamentalist trend seen in last one decade in Kashmir is thrust upon the people there from Pakistan and from other fundamental Muslim countries who believe in the export of terrorism to other countries.

It is hoped that readers will enjoy this book on the future of Kashmiri Pandits. The book is not merely about the Pandits, but a rich legacy of Kashmir is being analysed through chapters in this volume. To the Kashmiri Pandits in general, this book will present some facets of their cultural heritage. More works are being planned by KECSS in the near future. A seminar on "Remembering Lal Ded (Lalleshwari) in Modern Times" is planned for 12 November, 2000. Another seminar which will be a study of the socio-economic and cultural aspects of Kashmiri Pandits is planned for January, 2001. In March 2001, yet another seminar on "The Progress of Science : Role of Kashmiri Scholars" is planned.

In a fast moving world based on knowledge society, the KECSS wishes to explore more knowledge from Kashmir in particular. This education society wishes to analyse many issues of national and global society with the reserve of Kashmiri intellectuals, scientists, historians and educationists it has. It is hoped that knowledge which is useful for a creative and scientific world order, will be promoted. Kashmiri Pandits have a keen desire to live with honour and dignity as world citizens. They wish to carry forward their cultural and spiritual heritage and the message of their seers who produced enlightenment for all of mankind. Indeed, Arnold Toynbee, the celebrated British historian, says in his *Study of History* : "I still maintain that spirit, and particularly the creative spiritual effect of suffering for the sake of love, is the distinctive and significant feature of human affairs."[3] Though Kashmiri Pandits have suffered in silence, yet their sufferings, their love and creativity will produce much sunshine and harmony for the history of mankind. They will sooner be resettled in their

homes in Kashmir in their natural environments, where they will work to enhance their historical heritage of love, mystic knowledge, common spirituality and creative life and progress for mankind. The dark period of fundamentalism and violence will disappear.

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1. See "Nehru as a thinker", ch. 37, page 216, Prof. S. Bhatt, ed. *Kashmiri Pandits : A Cultural Heritage*, Lancers Book, 1995, New Delhi.
2. Ibid.
3. Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History : Reconsideration*, 1964, vol. 12, p. 6.

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REFERENCES

1. See "[illegible]", page 14, Part 5, [illegible] Kashmiri Pandits: A Cultural Heritage, Lancers Books, 1995, New Delhi.
2. Ibid.
3. Arnold Toynbee, A Study of History: [illegible] P. [illegible]

CHAPTER 2

Welcome Address for Seminar

Prof. B. B. Dhar

Good Morning, dear members of the Kashmiri Biradari,

Mr. Kaw - President, KECSS

Dr. Bhat - Vice President, KECSS

Mr. Kachroo- General Secretary, KECSS

Mr. Bhat - Member Executive Committee, KECSS

Members of the Executive KECSS, JMC

President, Pamposh Housing Society, Welfare Community, Temple Committee, Senior Members of the Biradari, Ladies, Gentlemen.

KECSS is honoured by the response it has received to the invitation to the seminar on "Kashmiri Pandits : Looking Ahead"

It is due to the highly professional and capable guidance of our President Mr. Kaw and the untiring academic efforts of Dr. Bhat that we could not only conceive the idea of Seminar and its theme, but made sure that it is held in an appropriate manner. This has, however, been possible with the background hard work put in by Secretary, KECSS, Shri Kachroo, Treasurer KECSS, A.K. Jalla and of course, Shri M.L. Pandit.

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* Vice President - KECSS, Formerly Professor and Head, Department of Mining, Banaras Hindu University and presently Director, AIU, New Delhi.

Before I could reflect a little bit on the seminar, I want to apologise for all the shortcomings, if any, and the little confusion that took place in the dates of our notification of the seminar. The confusion was a mix up of the modern computers and our over confidence to overlook the human errors. Nevertheless, I do hold myself responsible for the same and, I believe you will excuse me. I prefer to see a glass of water half full than half empty. For this effort we received several phone calls from the well-wishers of the community appreciating this effort. Anyway, this is not an issue to be discussed, rather we need to focus on the seminar topic instead : "Kashmiri Pandits : Looking Ahead"

Today the community stands not at the crossroad, but according to Shri Manmohan Dhar, at a Triangular Apex where Kashmiri Pandits, I quote, are :

- "Discarded by Kashmir
- Disowned by India or the Indian Government
- Divided amongst ourselves".

The other day I was with a couple of important gentlemen from Kashmir in my office. One of them said that once he was told by C.M. Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah to see the KPs give a joint view on issues, and find out how to achieve it. After his efforts he reported back to CM :

> "Sir, I tried, but failed, because they do not seem to agree within themselves - How can we have a common opinion from them".

This is the opinion they have about us. Should we not think about it. If this is our condition even today, we must seriously look ahead and come onto a common platform and project a forceful point of view.

We at KECSS are confident that this platform which has the presence of the elite of Kashmiri Pandits of Delhi, and several members (like Prof. Dhar from Jammu) as well as members from experienced hands at Kashmir affairs, experienced Academicians, Writers, Editors, Publishers and Orators, with one and the only one cause :

"How to move ahead with and within our community so that the past traditions, the past glory, the past culture, is not lost to the future generations."

With these words, I again welcome you on behalf of KECSS and on my own behalf. We are happy you have imposed confidence in us and encouraged us to move ahead through this seminar. We are sure it will go a long way to achieve our objective

[illegible]

Today the community stands not at the crossroad, but according to Shri [illegible] Dhar at a Triangular Apex where Kashmiri Pandits [illegible] are :

Threatened by [illegible]

[illegible] by [illegible] the Indian Government

[illegible] amongst themselves.

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"Sir I tried, but failed, because they do not seem to agree [illegible]. How can we have a common opinion [illegible]."

This is the [illegible]. Should we not think [illegible] seriously [illegible].

[illegible] which has the [illegible] and several [illegible] as well as members from [illegible]

CHAPTER 3

Keynote Address

*Maharaj Krishen Kaw**

Brothers and sisters of the Kashmiri Pandit family !

I am happy to be with all of you today in this Seminar on "Kashmiri Pandits : Looking Ahead". There have been so many seminars on the condition of Kashmiri Pandits that some of you must have said to yourselves : "Ho hum! Yet another Seminar". But I want this to be a seminar with a difference. I want that we look at history not in order to bemoan it or indulge in a masochistic orgy of breast-beating, but to learn from it and then look towards the future. Those of you who know me are aware that I am, by nature, an optimist and, therefore, I would like that we think together positively and with hope and enthusiasm towards our future.

When I look at the present day Kashmiri Pandit, I find him what he has to be, as the end product of a long, chequered, turbulent history. He is fair, handsome, with a sharp aquiline nose, sometimes with brown hair and freckles, sometime with light, blue or green eyes, as befits a person whose forefathers and mothers were pure Aryans and have retained the purity of their blood. He is sharp, intelligent, clever, adaptable, a loner, a leader, a survivor, a thinker, a doer, a talker, as befits the representative of a race composed entirely of Brahmins, who have by hallowed tradition

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* President, KECSS and Secretary, Education, HRD Ministry, Govt. of India

revelled in mastery over languages and shastras whose sole asset has been a brain honed to superb sharpness by constant debate and reflection, who has been hounded out of his motherland so often and been dispersed so frequently to the four corners of the wide world that survival, camouflage and flexibility have been second nature to him. Let us not forget that Kashmir has been the centre of the Brahminical tradition, the Buddhist tradition and the Shaivite tradition, and the Pandits of Kashmir have been respected over millennia for their scholarship, their analytical skills, their debating talent, their poetic genius and their spiritual richness. I have often been astounded at the reverence with which my Kashmiri ancestry is revered by the Pandits of the rest of India, from Kannauj to Kerala and often been at heart ashamed at how little we, the present day Kashmiri Pandits, deserve that accolade.

I am saying all this not to inflate our already swollen heads, but only to emphasize that we are heir to a great tradition, and should be proud of it. We should know about and remember all the great names of our sages and saints, scholars and poets, monks and kings, and be proud of them. We should talk about them to our children so that they know that we are special, we are in many ways God's chosen people and that we are here to fulfil a mission.

Friends, it is of that mission that I want to speak to you today. Because if we know what our mission is, we shall respect ourselves, preserve ourselves and project ourselves differently.

Let me start by saying that God has created this world and there is a certain method of his madness. Nothing in this world is an accident and the genesis of the Kashmiri Pandits and the treatment they have received can also not be an accident.

If we analyse the history of the last two millennia, we realize that it has been a period of unprecedented strife. It has seen the bloodiest conflicts in history, the rise of militant Islam, the challenge to traditional Vedanta by Buddhist and Jain revolts, and the response to the challenge in the form of Shankaracharya's Advaita which brought back Hinduism to India. The trouble with this response was the concept of Maya, which treated this world to be an illusion. We also accepted Ahimsa and renunciation in a big

way, with the result that the *sanyasi* became more important than the *grihastha* and self-abnegation more important that self-actualisation. It is my theory that the decline of India as a nation started with this doctrine of negation, pessimism, other worldiness and pussillanimity. That is why we lost battle after battle to hordes of invaders and were ruled by the Huns, the Kushans, the Greeks, the Mongols, the Afghans and the British.

In this entire arid landscape of life-abjuring philosophy, only Kashmir stood as the beacon light of hope. Very early our thinkers saw the fallacy in the thought processes of mainstream Hinduism and came up with Kashmir Shaivism. We saw with great clarity that if consciousness was real, the universe of names and forms could not but be real too. We grasped that "life was real, life was earnest" and so it had to be lived, not escaped from. We respected our local saints, most of whom were *grihasthas* and who demonstrated in their own life how one could live a life of purity while still in the family. Alone among the Brahmins of India we had the courage to accept the fact of Kashmir's cold climate and to become non-vegetarians. At the same time, we did not consider the drinking of spirituous liquors to be harmless and, therefore, invented the herbal *kehwa* to fend off the cold. We devised the *pheran* and the *kangri* as inexpensive, mobile devices to keep ourselves warm. We adapted the *samovar*, the *santoor*, the *tumbaknari* and host of other Central Asian artifacts as our own. Above all, we tried to create a culture of Kashmiriyat based on mutual respect and tolerance between the Hindus and the Muslims, as the only survival strategy suited to a minority.

One of our greatest achievements as Kashmiri Pandits was that we resisted conversion to Islam. Why is it that in the whole of India, Kashmir is the only place where there are only Hindu Brahmins and no Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Shudras? The answer stares us in the face. All the other castes got converted; only the Brahmins did not. We were killed, our women were raped, our houses looted again and again and yet again, but we did not get converted. Some Kashmiri Pandits always survived and even today, four lakhs of us survive. It was to convert us that Aurangzeb levied the Jaziya, for he saw that if the Kashmiri Pandit was humbled, the whole of India would turn Muslim. It was we who went to Guru Tegh Bahadur and persuaded him to wage war

against the Mughals. It was this that triggered off the rise of the Sikhs as the militant arm of Hinduism and finally led to the downfall of the Muslim rule in India.

The history of our constant battle with Islam and the sacrifices that we have made for the survival of Hinduism will be written in letters of gold, when the true history of human civilization is penned. God kept us alive because he wanted Kashmir Shaivism to be alive and to recharge Hinduism. This happened when Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa finally buried Mayavad. He asked in ringing tones that if God was real, how could his world be unreal? He said that the world was the body of God and God was the spirit of the world. This electrifying message was taken to the whole world by Swami Vivekananda and later by Sri Aurobindo. It was this turn-around in mainstream Hinduism which led to the renaissance of this country and to our freedom from the foreign yoke.

Today, that dark chapter is behind us. We are now at the beginning of the third millennium. Many seers have predicted that the golden age is about to dawn, that the 21st century will see a rise of moral and spiritual values and that Vedanta will be the universal philosophy of mankind. Sai Baba has said that the nations of the world are like railway coaches and India will be the spiritual engine that will pull the rest of the world towards God.

We Kashmiri Pandits have a role to play in this new renaissance. We have to be the practitioners of Kashmir Shaivism, wherever we are, wherever we go. We have to exhibit a total faith in God and His ways and to state clearly that the world of tomorrow has to move towards spiritual values and that to be spiritual does not mean withdrawal from the world. We have to reinterpret Lalleshwari's clarion call the "*Samooya Rozun*", as living in the present moment uncluttered by the past conditioning, as living in the dynamic awareness of reality as it confronts us from moment to moment, as living a life of honesty, integrity, compassion, truth, non-violence, peace, dharma and love, as living more for others than for oneself, as serving the poor, the needy, the less fortunate. It is to fulfil this mission that God has preserved this community of four lakh persons over the millennia.

It is to transmit this message that he has scattered us to every city and town of the world.

It is in this perspective that I would request you to look at our community and its problems. Again and again, there has been a move to throw us out of the Valley. Again and again, we have returned. So shall we return this time? I do not agree with the prophets of doom who have declared that this was the last battle and now the Kashmiri Pandits will never return to Kashmir. So said they when the Butshikan left only eleven families alive in the Valley. They were proved wrong. They will again be proved wrong. Those who think that Pakistan can win a decisive victory over India and wrench Kashmir away from us are living in a fool's paradise. In fact, any sane observer can see that India is well set on the path to superpowerhood, while Pakistan is sitting on a volcano. It will be destroyed by its own misdeeds, its drug traffic, its terrorism, its proxy wars, its petty jehads, its politics of hate. Negative things never survive, they carry in themselves the seeds of their destruction. So no one can prevent us from going back.

If that is agreed upon, then all our moves should be based on a long-term vision and strategy. In my view, we should not ask for a separate homeland, for that is an exercise in futility. Even if we are given a few thousand acres of land, what shall we do there? No, we should fight for our right to go back and live in the Valley, everywhere, unfettered, untramelled.

I can see that one day Kashmir will again be a Hindu majority state as in old times. How this will be brought about I cannot say. India cannot have peace in Kashmir if it is not a Hindu majority state. I feel that some day, some party in Delhi will wake up and do what ought to have been done in 1947. We should work for the achievement of this goal.

The persons who are most likely to go back are those who have land, especially agricultural land in the villages, and those who have shops and property back in the Valley. We must look after them and help them tide over the present state of penury and deprivation. And for this purpose, the All India Kashmiri Samaj must be recognized as the supreme coordinating forum for all Kashmiri organizations, so that the assistance to our hapless brethren can be coordinated and given more meaningfully.

Meanwhile, many of us are in good positions, both in Government and elsewhere. It is possible, without any fanfare, without publicity, to render assistance to unfortunate Kashmiri migrant families and their children. We can have them admitted to educational institutions, grant them concessions, employ them wherever we can, accede to their requests for transfers and adjustments and so on. Let us build a community of mutual help.

And while we are busy doing all this, let us continue doing what we are so good at – being the best in our chosen sphere of work. Let us be known as a community of spiritual achievers, honest, truthful, cooperative, compassionate, caring, energetic, hardworking and pleasant perfectionists. To a large extent, we are this already, but we can always be better.

Not to forget in the process that we are proud to be Kashmiri Pandits, rooted in our past traditions but already jogging along the information superhighway, going to the valley for a bride but prepared to serve anywhere in the world, continuing with our *dejharus*, our *kangris*, our *pherans*, our *santoors*, our *tumbaknaris*, our *damaloos*, our *chok charvan*, our *'varay chhiv mahra'*, our *'posh ta habi chhuy'*, our *'posha pooza and maanzi-raat'*, our *'lilas'* and our *'soofiyana kalaam'*, wherever we go.

So, let us race ahead as leaders of humanity, as a community of handsome intellectuals, with our culture and language intact, with hope in our heart and joy in our soul, a spring in our step and a song on our lips, towards the coming Golden Age of humanity, ready to serve as God's missionaries in this cosmic drama.

Thank you.

CHAPTER 4

Vote of Thanks

The opening part of the Vote of Thanks on the occasion of the Seminar "Kashmiri Pandits : Looking Ahead"

मुकाम सोन.......

— *Moti Lal Bhatt "Shafaq" Bharati*

– 'शफ़क़' भारती

मुबारक यथ रॅतिस सातस मुबारक
मुबारक शोकुँ समनस
खयाल सो'म्बरॅनस
व्यच़ार करनस – मुबारक।।
व्यच़ारॅच कथ छि–
अऽस्य् क्याह आऽस्य्, बज्यव क्याह?
बनुन असि क्याह छु नवि सरुँ,
करुन असि क्याह छु, किथुँपाऽठ्य्,
छु कति प्यठुँ कौत वातुन,
छु रोवमुत यी छु प्रावुन।।
छु वातुन तऽथ्य् थज़रस,
मुक़ाम सोन पथ काल़स
येति ओस न्यथ मुश्कान,
लमुन तऽथ्य् बजरस कुन,
पज़रॅच वथ छि प्रारान,
सेज़रॅच कऽतिज दिवान नाद।।

(Translation by Dr. S.S. Toshkhani follows)

Greetings
On this auspicious occasion !
Congratulations
for assembling here
With so much enthusiasm !
For putting together ideas
And pondering over things
The moot point to ponder is :
What were we? What have we come to be?
What shall we become hereafter?
What is our destination?

It is what we have lost that we have to find
We have to attain the same high position
that we once occupied
Our place in the past
Was ever fragrant

And now we have to march
Towards the same greatness
The way of truthfulness is waiting for us
The swallow of straight forwardness
is calling us!

It is a matter of profound pleasure for me that even as a man of little or no significance I have been provided an opportunity by organisers of the Seminar, in the spirit of same sightedness, to formally thank and express gratitude to persons of calibre endowed with an understanding of the plan and purpose of life, who have graced this momentous occasion by their benign presence.

Given the context, I would like to first felicitously highlight the gratifying intent of our Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society in ably planning and organising the Seminar which is being enthusiastically conducted today, as a maiden effort of the type by the Society, encompassing, on a wider canvas, the crowning glory of our ethical, social, religious, ethnic and cultural heritage - our pride-inspiring possessions together with our future prospects as a community of the Satisar of yore.

Thematically as well as in its entirety, the Seminar is yet another positive step towards betterment through revival for our sure survival together. Being more than relevant in the very hard times our peace-loving minority community is, once again, passing through on account of the upheaval caused by Islamist terrorists forcing our extirpation from our own motherland, the Seminar will remind us about the grandeur of over 5000 years of splendourous past of our indigenous community of Kashmir. We will rediscover the forceful aspects of our life and living since ancient times and consciously drinking draughts of the re-enlivening ambrosia galore of vigour and vitality, flowing therefrom, we will, I believe so, once again emerge as titans.

I have good reasons to think and, therefore, to expect that this Seminar will stand out, in the annals of Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society in particular and our community as a whole in general, as one of the most meaningful exercises carried out within the country and globally by Kashmiri Pandits in the last about a decade.

Subordinating our personal interests to that of the community; ardently applying ourselves to tasks undertaken for the good of the community i.e. doing things for others with Sradha is what our scriptures address as Nara Yajña. It is a meritorious act characteristic of self-dedication. It needs to the carefully understood that the personal welfare is ever constantly and reliably contained in the public welfare. That is the nature's law which is not to be treated disrespectfully. Giving effect to this law is the practice of Yajña. As a salutary act, a sacred act, it is conducive to good results. It is rewarding both for the one who gives and the one who receives. Both of them stand to gain immeasurably.

What we, having assembled over here, are set to do is, verily, a *mahayajña*. I take this whole complex as a Yajñashala; the particular place earmarked for the act as a Yajñakund; our actions, our spoken words untainted by selfishness, our disinterested service as the offerings (*âhutis*); noble intents and purposes behind the endeavours as symbolic of gods and goddesses worshipped (*ârâdhya*) and ourselves as worshippers (*ârâdhak*) seeking divine benediction in the form of positive outcome for everyone in our community.

The Plenary Session of the Seminar held under the calm and comforting umbrella of the august chairmanship of respected Shri M.K. Kaw, President of Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society, has peacefully and purposefully come to an end. On behalf of the office-bearers and members of the Society and on my own behalf, I sincerely thank Kaw Sahib for gracefully chairing the Session and delivering an enlightening Key-note address full of optimism and promise, full of ease and eloquence with a flavour of its own. We are also grateful to him for initiating, as President of the Society, certain other remarkable developmental programmes for a common cause. The chief among these initiatives is the setting up of a National Council for Development of Kashmiri Language and Literature.

Filled with high spirits, the welcome speech made by Prof. B.B. Dhar, Vice-president of the Society, has been laudably impressive and scholarly. Similarly, skillfully knit and coming smoothly and readily, the introductory remarks of Prof. S. Bhatt, another Vice-President of the Society, more than introduced the scholars' meet, mirroring the image of a man of acumen in him. Thanks to both of them for the pains taken.

Sincere thanks are also due to the good ladies and gentlemen who, showing intense interest in the programme, have enthusiastically joined in good number the proceedings of the Plenary Session, as patient listeners, raising the status of the session and the deliberations.

Thank you all once again and JAI HIND!

PART - II

PRESENTATION PAPERS : KASHMIRI PANDIT CULTURE AND HERITAGE

CHAPTER 5

The Essence of Kashmiri Pandit Culture and Heritage and its Future

*Prof. S.L. Pandit**

In order to understand the evolution of the special culture and heritage of a small minority group of Kashmiri Brahmins, we have to go back to a past following the decay and disintegration of the independent Hindu rule in Kashmir by 1324-1327 A.D. In 1327, Shahmir, a clever adventurer from Swat, having first secured a leading position in the steadily weakening Hindu administration, captured power by a coup as recorded in our authentic historical works. Possibly in its early phase, Shahmir and his immediate successors, were somewhat wild in their attitude towards the Hindu community and the Hindu bureaucracy manned mainly by the learned Brahmins. There are some authentic records to establish, that to begin with, the Muslim rulers retained Sanskrit as the alternate official language till a generation or two, whereafter it was completely replaced by Persian. Then came the fanatical and tyrannical rule of Sultan Sikander, the iconoclast (1398-1420 A.D.) who let loose a sort of hell against the non-Muslims through forced conversions and widespread destruction of their holy religious shrines all over the Valley. Possibly, by this time, the lower Hindu castes had got converted to Islam, both by use of brute force and passionate zeal of the Islamic missionaries moving freely

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among the socially backward and rigid Hindu caste hierarchies already shaken by the spread of the Buddhist creed when Kashmir was for a considerable period one of the staunchest centres of the anti-caste movement of the Buddhist cult. As regards the unprecedented persecution of non-Muslims unleashed by Sultan Sikander, no authentic statistical records have come down to us. There is just a tradition that most of the members of only the still surviving Brahmin caste migrated from the valley and just eleven families survived possibly in some inaccessible mountain hide-outs. This way migration was largely limited to the neighbouring and still autonomous Hindu principalities like Jammu, Kashmir, Poonch and Rajouri. Then came the benign and most tolerant rule of Zain-ul-Abidin (1422-1472), popularly known among Kashmiris down to our own times as Bad Shah or the great king. He sent round his official agents to persuade most of these migrant refugees to return to the valley in safety and honour and took advantage of their learning, experience and talents in pursuing his unprecedented nation-building projects, both in the towns and the countryside of Kashmir.

That was about five centuries ago. But I should like to observe that this current problem of a small surviving and once uprooted Brahmin community is the result not only of Zain-ul Abidin's tolerant and constructive policies but also of almost contemporaneous development of the tolerant Sufi or Rishi cult among Kashmiri Muslims and projection of a deep rooted Advaita religious philosophy of Shaivism evolved by learned Kashmiri Brahmins. Even so, the question remains as to how this small Brahmin minority, firmly attached to their exclusive cultural and ethnic identity, survived intact down to the present times through shifting phases of historical movement - not uniformly benign in their aggressive spiritual mores - for about five centuries. It would be interesting to recapitulate the factors that held them together so long, in spite of a few unfavourable historical factors, like Emperor Aurangzeb's partial recanting of Emperor Akbar's policy of tolerance towards all faiths and a few decades (1760-1819) of the ruthless Afghan misrule, down to our own times. Let me briefly sum up these factors that held us together for so long.

The first and foremost factor was our close and passionate attachment to our special geographical and cultural homeland of

the valley of Kashmir round which we established our own local shrines in token of the leading popular Hindu pilgrim centres, like Ganga, Prayag, Godavari, Jwalamukhi and the rest, obviously not easily approachable in the past centuries in the mountain - girt fortress of our much-loved homeland of the valley of Kashmir. Yes, many ambitious and talented members of our community during the past three centuries migrated to various urban centres of North India, first to the Mughal capitals of Agra and Delhi, then to the Nawabi centres of Uttar Pradesh and the princely states of Rajasthan. With the complete decline of the Mughal power, many of them moved over also to Lahore and Amritsar and got well established in the Punjab under the competent suzeranity of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. So far as I know, these migrants were the first among the Hindu middle classes in North India to start learning English. In short, most of these migrants left Kashmir not merely as a reaction to any tyrannical postures or policies of the local rulers but in search of better positions through their mastery of the Persian medium and obviously drawn out on the initiative of their remote or close connections with the families that had preceded them in their exodus from the valley. So, out of Kashmir, this migrant group distinguished themselves in securing better occupations in view of their inherent qualities of adaptation to a changed millieu and their innate quality of picking up ways of living and culture so different from those prevailing in the valley of Kashmir.

During my own student days at Lucknow (1928-1930), I had opportunities of friendly and almost fraternal contact with Kashmiri migrants of earlier times. Probably, about that time, Lucknow could claim to house the largest number of this Kashmiri migrant community. Most of them were well off and by early nineteenth century had established a collective residential centre which is still called the Kashmiri Mohalla. They did not speak Kashmiri language but had adequately adapted themselves to the Nawabi culture of Lucknow. Several among them like Daya Shanker Nasim, Rattan Nath Dar Azad and Brij Narayan Chakbast, had distinguished themselves by making important contributions to the development of modern Urdu literature. Even so, they held together as a small but exclusive Brahmin community. Let me explain how this was done.

First, in their social exclusiveness, they were very rigid in marrying their boys and girls only within the resident Kashmiri Brahmin families, though some of them had no hesitation in marrying their children into any well placed family still living in the valley. In the observance of their annual festivals and sacred days, they scrupulously followed the exclusive almanacs adopted by us in Kashmir. In all their social and sacred rituals, they uniformly observed the routine that covered the life of Brahmin in Kashmir, from *namakaran, mundan* (tonsure), *yagnopavit*, marriage and post mortem rites as observed back in the valley of Kashmir.

So what is the position now? I agree that with the imposition of universal adult franchise in India, our politicians have all over the country been pressurised by "vote banks" emerging not as uniform national groups but as members of exclusive claimants based on religion, caste, language and religion. This had led, all over the cuntry, to a process of ignoring sheer merit and record of work in the recruitment and promotion in government jobs. These discriminations encouraged many qualified job-seeking members of all traditionally talented groups to move away from their long established geographical and cultural habitats. Just, in this context, let us consider how the traditional and exclusive Brahmin communities in South India were discriminated against during the past four decades. But they organised themselves and their joint material assets and tried to stand on their own feet. Similarly, quite a number of our talented young people, both since 1950 and later, following the holocaust of 1989 onwards, moved out and secured good jobs in different regions of India and in advanced countries abroad. Even so, because of our comparatively small numbers, many factors of our exclusive identity many not be easy to retain. Let me now record those briefly.

I myself stayed on in Kashmir for nearly two decades, following my formal retirement in July 1970 upto 1989, because of my continued connection with the University of Kashmir and the governing bodies of a couple of very fine schools in Srinagar - one for boys and the other for girls - during these years, except for a few months' winter sojourn in Delhi. All these years, I found that life in Srinagar, Kashmir, was for me more active and more peaceful

than in Delhi. In November, 1989, I had the occasion to visit some of my rural-based relatives in South Kashmir. Selective violence and call for hartals had already caused some worry and panic for us in the towns of Srinagar, Anantnag, Sopore and Baramulla. But the countryside was absolutely peaceful with our people performing weddings and other functions with the unstinted cooperation of their Muslim friends and neighbours.

Then came the general exodus of our people from January, 1990 onwards from the towns and villages resulting in the wanton destruction or forcible illegal occupation of our personal immovable properties. This was obviously deliberately planned by the Pakistan ISI as a process of ethnic cleansing of the valley of Kashmir. In contrast, during the years of militancy, while repeated sorties of selective killings of innocent people, were witnessed, there was hardly any measurable destruction of immovable property. As a consequence of the militancy in Kashmir, many of our middle-aged and old couples from the villages, large numbers of our resourceless young students, now encamped in unsanitary and ramshackle shelters around Jammu, Nagrota and Udhampur and beyond, have been the worst sufferers of this deluge. Neither the authorities in Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi nor any of the international agencies are bothered to come to their rescue.

Then there is the question of our mother tongue, Kashmiri. I wonder whether with the wide dispersal of large numbers of our young people beyond India, how many of them now based abroad speak even Hindi. As a result of this vast and unprecedented dispersal and with large numbers of our talented young boys and girls seeking jobs in diverse areas around India, I am afraid whether we can restrict their weddings within our own exclusive ethnic group. It is a sort of story being reproduced in various dimensions in widely dispersed regions of the globe with many religious and ethnic groups being uprooted from their centuries old habitats by the fundamentalist and fanatical armed gangs. In this context, I feel that our future prospects as an exclusive cultural entity are far from bright. But those of us who are now partially based in Indian urban centres outside Kashmir could perhaps group themselves as a centrally organised social unit bound by a common reformist social code relating to celebrations of weddings and other ceremonies. I feel there is some hope then

that we may still continue to hold together socially, as was done by those Kashmiri migrants who had settled in the past mostly in the North Indian urban centres. Possibly, in such a context, some of us could keep alive our interest in our earlier religio-cum-social lore of a high order produced by our Kashmir based scholars and savants and even revive interest in what has been handed down to us in the form of Kashmiri literature, both traditional song and story, as also some new literary forms of our present era through a script easy to handle and transcribe in print.

CHAPTER 6

Saraswat Brahmins of Kashmir

*Chaman Lal Gadoo**

The origin of the vale of Kashmir, according to popular legend, was a vast mountain lake called Satisar, the lake of Sati, and geologists confirm this. There is a tradition that its drainer was an ascetic, named Kashyapa, hence the reclaimed land was called Kashyapmar which later became Kashmir. The mountains which surround Kashmir are varied in form and colour. Kashmir is renowned for its lakes, rivers and abundant flora and fauna.

According to Kalhana's *Rajtarangini*, the oldest Sanskrit chronicle, after the Valley was drained out, Brahmins were brought there by Kashyapa Rishi who were philosophers engrossed in the pursuit of knowledge and practising the lives of purity. These Brahmins, popularly called Kashmiri Pandits, form a distinct class of their own and were considered to be the perfect specimens of the ancient Aryan settlers in the Valley. (see Monier William's *Modern India and Indians*).

Areawise, Jammu and Kashmir is the second largest State in the Republic of India. Its original area of 222,713 sq. kilometres has now been reduced to 138,992 sq. kilometres only, after the cease-fire in 1949 following Pakistani aggression in 1948, and 78,993 sq. kilometres are under illegal occupation of Pakistan. During China's aggression in 1962, it forcibly occupied 37,555 sq. kilometres in the Ladakh division of the State, Pakistan gifted 5,180

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sq. kilometres of the State's territory under its illegal occupation to China. Kashmir commands a strategic importance touching on North-East, Afghanistan, China and Pakistan.

Kashmiri Pandits

Mr. George Campbell, in his book "Ethnology of India" says : The Kashmiri Brahmins are quite high Aryan in the type of their features, very fair and handsome, with high chiselled features and no trace of inter-mixture of the blood of any lower race. It may be partly occupation, but they have certainly a greater regularity of features than others of a rougher type, with, however, a less manly looking physique and colourless, ruddy and more inclining to a somewhat sallow fairness. The high nose, slightly aquiline, but by no means what we call Jewish of nutcracker, is a common type. Raise a little the brow of a Greek statue and give the nose a small turn at the bony point in front of the bridge, so as to break the straightness of line, you have the model type of this part of India, to be found both in living men and in the statues in the Peshawar Valley. There are also a good many straight noses and some varieties, as in all places, but much less departure from an ordinary handsome standard than in most countries. The figure of the ordinary working Kashmiri is strong and athletic. But none of them are martial and the Brahmins, are in this respect, no exception. They rule by the brain and the pen and not by the sword."

Saraswat Brahmins

Kashmiri Pandits are offsprings of Rishis and belong to the highest order of Brahmins, the Saraswats, highly educated and almost hundred per cent literate. The Saraswat Brahmins are mentioned in the Vedas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagawata and even the Bhavisyttata Purana. They are descendants of great sage Saraswat Muni who lived on the bank of river Saraswati. There are many versions of the origin of this great, by now extinct river Saraswati. *Rajtarangini,* which is the complete record of Kashmir history, records in the Chapter "The Shrine of Shrada" as under :

"The temple of Sharda rises in prominent and commanding position above the right bank of the Madhumati on the terrace-

like foot of a spur which descends from a high pine-clad mountain to the east. Immediately below this terrace to the North West is the spot where the waters of the Madhumati and the Kishenganga mingle. There, on a small sandy beach, the pilgrims perform *Shradas* to their ancestors. From the height of the staircase, which forms the approach of the temple from the West, an extensive view opens. To the South East, the Valley of the Madhumati is seen narrowing gradually into a george between precipitous spurs through which passes the direct route to Kashmir via Kroras. In the North East from where the Kishenganga issues, successive ranges of barren steep mountains with snowy peaks behind them seem to close all passages. To the North, a narrow chasm in the rocks marks the deboucher of the Sangam river, the Kankatotri of the map, which flows from the mountains towards Cilos and falls into the Kishenganga a short distance above the Madhumati. It is the Saraswati of Kalhana's description, still known by that name to local traditions."

Sharda Temple

In the ancient times in Kashmir, there existed a great temple called Saraswat temple. In the temple premises there existed one of the best manuscripts on Saraswats and their way of living. According to Prof. Bhuller, the manuscripts of Kashmir were found in this Saraswat temple. This temple is situated on the bank of Kishenganga in the North West of Kashmir. This statement was made by Jain scholar Hema Chandra, (AD 1088-1172) in *PRABHAVAKACARITA*.

This ancient Tirtha, though once evidently one of the most important temples of Kashmir and famous far beyond its limits has in recent times become almost unknown to Kashmiri Pandits as it falls in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). According to *Rajtarangini*, Lalita Ditya Muktapida in 7th Century marched towards seven Konkans. According to Mr. H.H. Wilsom in his book "Hindu History of Kashmir", seven Konkans are spread on Malabar coast - Kerala, Tilangana, Govarashtra (Goa), Konkan proper, Kerataha, Varalatta and Vevrvera. We have a strong belief that large number of Saraswats had settled down in Malabar Coast thereafter as they found the land more fertile and atmosphere akin so that they could live there and be prosperous.

In the light of recent investigation and researches in history, Kashmiris played a vital role in the development of intellectual, moral, religious, spiritual and social life of India as a a whole. The works of Utpala and Abhinavgupta are treasures of Indian philosophy. Charka and Koka are indispensable for the study of Medicine and Sex respectively. Kalhana and Bilhana are known for their historical excellence.

Kashmiri Language

The Kashmiri language belongs to the Indo-Aryan family of languages. It has its origin in Vedic, Sanskrit itself. During the Muslim period in Kashmir, Persian and Urdu words and phrases have also been assimilated in the language. Kashmiri scholars have also contributed to poetry, aesthetics as also to other branches of learning. Although research into the origin of Kashmiri language is yet to be undertaken in all its seriousness, yet one finds traces of its origin in Sanskrit work called *Setubandh*, written by King Pravar Sen. From 8th to 13th century, there is no record of the development of Kashmiri language and the first monumental book in Kashmiri which comes handy is the *Mahayana Prakash* of Shitikanth. It is written in the Vakh form which was further enriched by the great Lalla Yogeswari in 14th century.

Philosophic Traditions

It is a known fact that both Shaivagams and Vaishnavagams have originated from Kashmir. The rich Shiva Shaktha and Tantra tradition of Kashmir is still in vogue in the form of religious practices and rituals performed by Kashmiri Brahmins. Although Kashmiri scholars have given a rich monastic Trika philosophy called Kashmiri Shaiva Darshan, in respect of religious practices and rituals Kashmiri Pandits have always followed the Vedic prescriptions.

The history of the Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmins serves to demonstrate how their religious and cultural views developed into the present century. Starting from the Valley of Kashmir, the ancestors of the Bhanaps migrated to all parts of India. These Kashmiri Brahmins are considered to be the descendants of the Aryans who migrated into India from Central Asia or Eastern Europe. However, these people differentiate themselves from the

rest of the Saraswat Brahmins in that they identify their caste with Goddess Saraswati, who has been mentioned in the Vedas as the Goddess of Learning. However, the Gaud Saraswat Brahmins residing on the Western coast of India (primarily in Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka) are thought to have descended from these Kashmiri Brahmins. Substantial evidence has been set forth by several historians who maintain that the Kashmiri Brahmins migrated to Goa by the eleventh century AD.

Ancestry of Saraswat Brahmins

To trace the Gaud Saraswat Brahmin ancestry, from Kashmir to Goa, one must begin with the story of the famous seer, Saraswata. When there was a famine in Northern India, he continued to recite the Vedic texts by consuming the fish that Goddess Saraswati had given to him. The Brahmins of later generations who accepted fish as a part of their diet were often known to have referred to his story to justify their full-fledged status as Brahmins despite their consuming fish. Since the consuming of fish was also prevalent in the culture of many Bengali Brahmins and because of the apparent similarities between the languages of the two groups, many Gaud Saraswat Brahmin scholars maintained some of their religious views while modifying others. In the year 1708, a small group of these migrants had established their own unique caste and preserved the Guruparampara. The teaching of the Gurus and their dedication to the devotees strengthen the unity of the caste members which has survived till the present day.

Kashmiri Saraswats Now

The Saraswats of Kashmir, with a glorious history of thousands of years at their back, have been at the receiving end now for over six and a half centuries. Their decline in Kashmir began in 1339 A.D. when a Muslim courtier in the court of the last Hindu King of Kashmir, usurped the throne treacherously. The full impact of the treachery became visible with the advent of Sultan Sikander Butshikan (destroyer of idols) forty years later. The full fury of fanaticism was unleashed on the largely peaceful Hindus of Kashmir during the next forty years. This was the time (A.D. 1379-1420) when most of the Saraswats of Kashmir were either killed or had to flee from their millennia-old homeland for

the plains and coastal areas of India, mostly the western coast. This was the time when some of these Saraswats from the hamlet of Mangalore to the west of Kashmir, in the foothills of the now internationally known tourist resort of Tangamarg-Gulmarag, migrated to the Konkan coast and perpetrated the memory of their own hamlet in Kashmir by naming their new abode as Mangalore.

Distinct History and Culture

As stated earlier, Saraswats of Kashmir, the *Rishi bhoomi* of yore, have had a distinguished history and rich culture that produced a renowned historian of great calibre, Kalhana Pandit of the *Rajatarangini* fame. Apart from this, the Shiv-Shakti cult and the Mahayana Buddhism originated from Kashmir besides a lot of literature on religion, philosophy, history etc. All this in Sanskrit, the mother-tongue of the great Bharatvarsha, the language of Shrimad Bhagwad Gita.

It was this very talented community of Kashmir, the progeny of Vedic Rishis, which was brought to the brink of total destruction during those forty years of fanatical Islamic rule, calamitous times indeed for them. Tradition has it that only eleven Saraswat families could survive the catastrophe. The next fifty years (1420-1470 AD) of King Zain-ul-Abidin (Badshah or the great king) saw reversal of the process of persecution of Saraswats. They were recalled, their temples and shrines rebuilt and they were allowed freedom of faith. There is no record to indicate how many returned and how many were added to the eleven families, which had survived the butchery of the previous fifty years.

It was at this point of time that the surviving Saraswats produced a Messiah of their own, in the person of the great Shree Bhat. He re-organised this decimated community of Saraswat Brahmins who had no *Yajmans* to whose spiritual and religious need they could cater. All the *Yajmans* had either been killed or converted, forcibly or otherwise, to Islam. Shree Bhat created a new class of *Purohits* from among them. It will be interesting to recollect here that the elder son or the eldest daughter of any family was selected to pursue religious and spiritual studies and in time to cater to these needs of the family. The others were freed for temporal work like agriculture, etc. In the course of a century or so, those left free for temporal jobs shifted to almost all the court

languages according to needs of the time. They mastered Arabic, Persian, English and Urdu languages apart from Hindi. This period also saw the emergence of the saint-poetess, Lalleshwari, who gave a new dimension to the Shaiva-Shakti cult as also the birth of Rishi-Sufi cult of Kashmir urging peace and brotherhood among Hindus and Muslims.

During the Mughal Period

The next 120 years or so was comparatively peaceful, with some interludes of religious persecution, when the Saraswats learnt to live with Islam according to the preaching of Lalleshwari and Nunda Rishi. The annexation of Kashmir to the Mughal Empire in 1586 AD ushered in an era of peace for the Saraswats, marred only by the puritanical disposition, bordering on fanaticism, of the last known Moghul emperor, Aurangzeb (1658-1707 AD). Many of his Subedars were under instruction to convert all Kashmir Saraswats to Islam which he had expected to help him to convert the Brahmins of Varanasi leading in turn to conversion of mass of Hindus in Northern India to Islam. This process was thwarted by the supreme sacrifice offered by the ninth Sikh Guru, Tegh Bahadur Ji. All this is recorded history.

The decline of Mughals after Aurangzeb led the Kashmir Saraswats to another calamitous period of about 67 years (1753-1820 AD) of brutal Afghan rule. This was broken after the Sikh ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab annexed Kashmir in 1818 AD. This was followed by a brief Sikh rule followed by Dogra monarchy (1846-1947 AD).

Sikh Dogra Rule

The 128 year of rule of Sikhs and Dogras (1819-1947 AD) saw the flowering of Kashmiri Saraswats both in Kashmir and in other parts of India. The Saraswats in Kashmir took to modern education in English and produced brilliant administrators, educationists, doctors, engineers, advocates, judges and the like. The euphoria thus generated made them ignore business and industry. They also participated in the freedom struggle in India against British rule and in Kashmir against the autocratic dispensation of the day, through the ruler there was not an alien. As night follows the day and darkness the sunshine, the 128 year

calm in Kashmir and in the lives of Kashmir Saraswats was shattered by the partition of India in 1947 on the basis of obnoxious two-nation theory. This played havoc with the Saraswats in Kashmir. From 1947 onwards they were treated as Hindus, rather than Kashmiris, who had contributed generously to the development of Kashmir on modern lines in all walks of life.

Post-1947 turmoil

Thus began another turmoil in their lives. To begin with, they were divested of their landed properties in the name of so-called "land to the tiller" policy and deprived of other opportunities to grow along with their Muslim compatriots. The democratic rule in Kashmir ushered in Kashmir in 1947 was steadily transformed into Muslim rule with no consideration for the minority. As a result of these machinations and manipulations, thousands of Kashmiri Saraswats had to migrate once again to the plains of India for employment and sustenance. Their population percentage in Kashmir started going down from 15% in 1947, reaching a low of 5% in 1981. In the meanwhile they had started to switch over to business, industry and tourism etc., apart from public employment where opportunities for them were fast dwindling.

The Muslims in Kashmir are the ruling elite of the State. They dominate its entire economic organisation and enjoy communal precedence in all social forums. Islam is virtually the official religion of the State. Whereas the Muslims constitute a little more than half the population of the state, they possess three-fourths share in legislative bodies, administrative organisations and all the local Government institutions. In the Kashmir province, the Hindus have no elected representation in the State legislature, nor do they have any such representation in the local bodies. They constitute less than five per cent of the administrative services of the State and have less than one per cent share in the higher cadres of the State administration. Muslims monopolise 94 per cent of the State services in Kashmir. The Hindus of Kashmir province have absolutely no share in the decision-making bodies of the State Government, which have always been constituted by the Muslims of the Kashmir Province. More than 90 per cent of the admissions to professional, technical and other educational institutions are reserved for Muslims in one form or

the other, purely on communal basis. The Hindus, Sikhs and other minorities share a bare 8 per cent of the educational facilities that the State provides.

The Muslims own and control the entire economic and industrial structure of the Kashmir Province. They own 96 per cent of the agricultural land, orchards and other urban landed estates. They enjoy a monopoly over the entire industrial organisation, trade, commerce, financial resources and exports of the province of Kashmir. They have complete monopoly in trading in fruits, carpets, shawls, wood-work, woollens, silk etc. The Hindus in Kashmir have never been allowed to have any share in the tourist industry, the transport organisation, concessionaire contracts for the construction of the State property, roads and buildings and the licenses for imports and exports which the State Government has been lavishly distributing among the Muslims.

Quit Kashmir Call for the Saraswats

The Kashmiri Saraswats awakened to a devastating call to quit Kashmir "without their womenfolk" late in the evening on January 19, 1990. The call came through loudspeakers blaring threats to "Kafirs" to quit or perish, from mosques throughout the Valley. Then a hell, reminiscent of the horrendous rule of Sikander 'Butshikan' was let loose against the Saraswats. Killing, burning, looting became the order of the day. As a result, about 400,000 of them migrated from the Valley reducing their presence in Kashmir to mere 0.1% per cent of its total population. Even this 0.1 per cent is not safe. Twenty-three of them, including infants, were murdered in cold blood on the eve of Republic Day, 1998 at Wondhama Village in Srinagar district. The rest may be killed in time to come or converted to Islam. Nobody knows. Till date nearly 1,500 members of this Kashmiri Pandit community have been brutally murdered and more than 400,000 forced out from the valley during the last decade. More than 10,000 displaced persons have died due to hostile environs and physical and psychological disorders. 212 temples and more than 24,000 houses belonging to Kashmiri Pandits, hundreds of their business establishments, educational, cultural and religious institutions have been destroyed with the object of decimating all traces of the 6000 year old civilisation of this indigenous community.

Presently, approximately over 2.5 lakh Saraswats of Kashmir are putting up in camps and shovels in Jammu Division of the State, with another large concentration of about 2.5 lakhs in and around Delhi. The rest of the over seven lakh strong community (post 1941 when they constituted 15 percent of the Valley's population) are scattered throughout India and abroad. The community is desperately trying to protect is cultural and civilisational heritage even after the exile. Education has been our first priority. How long and how effectively this heritage can be protected, outside our birthplace, is a matter of conjecture.

In this dark and depressing scenario, it is encouraging to see the Saraswats in India and elsewhere in the world holding out to us their hands of affection and friendship. Let us blossom together henceforth.

May mother Saraswati bless us all, open up new vistas for our development, spiritually and materially, and enable us to serve our motherland, our Bharatvarsha, to the best of our abilities and capacities. Let us not forget our roots, we should pledge to return to our sacred *Janma Bhoomi* Kashmir.

CHAPTER 7

The Festivals of the Kashmiri Pandits

T.N. Dhar, 'Kundan'

Kashmir is known as the abode of Rishis because it has provided a calm and serene shelter to sages and savants for their penance. In the hoary past, it was inhabited by the Nagas as is vouched by Nila in his *Nilmat Purana* and Kalhana in his *Rajatarangini*. Nila, himself a naga, was the son of the illustious Rishi, Kashyapa. The penance and the efforts of Kashyapa transformed the vast span of water called the 'Sati Sar' into a fertile valley fit for inhabitation and worship by the austere Rishis. It was he who helped these Rishis to get rid of the demon 'Jalodbhava'. These Rishis, finding the place secure for their 'Tapas', made it their home and gave it the name 'Kashyapa-mar' after the Rishi who founded it. This name, in due course became Kashmir.

These pious and compassionate Rishis did not neglect the *nagas* and *rakshasas* who were the original tribesmen living in this land. They made arrangements to satisfy their needs and requirements from time to time. This gave rise to certain peculiar customs and festivals, not prevalent in any other part of the country. These forest-dwelling tribes would usually demand food items during the winter months. It is because of this that most of these festivals are held in the month of 'Pausha' of the lunar calendar. Some of these are described below :

Monjaher taeher : Monjhaer in Kashmiri means the lunar month of Marga Shirsha. *Taeher* means yellow cooked rice mixed with mustard. It is customary for Kashmiris to cook such rice on

all auscpicious days, and on Tuesdays and Saturdays, offer it to their chosen deity and then distribute it among neighbours, friends and relatives. But on the first day following the end of *Margashirsha*, that is the beginning of the Pausha month, such rice is specially cooked, offered to the *Griha devata* and *Grama devata* and then distributed. More often it is vowed that should a desire be fulfilled, like getting a son, obtaining employment or finding a suitable match, the household would prepare this rice regularly on this day every year. Coinciding with this is a very significant observance on this day called the *Matrika Pujan*. Since time immemorial there has been a belief that the sound is the Divine *Shabda Brahma* and that the language has originated from the sound produced by the *Damroo* of Lord Shiva. These sounds, fourteen in number, are called *Maheshwara Sutrani*. These are divided into eight groups, one of vowels and seven of consonants. Each group has a deity who is propitiated on this day. Vowels begin with 'Aa' and the consonants with 'Ka', 'Ch', 'Ta', '*Ta*', 'Pa', 'Ya' and 'Sha'. respectively. So the prayer is offered to the relevant deities in this order. Amayay, Kamayay, Charvageyay, Tankadharyanyay, Tarayay, Parvatyay, Yakhshanyay and Shri Sharika Bhagavatyay. All that we know, this day might have been fixed to initiate a student to a school of learning and he was required to offer prayers before such initiation.

Gada Bhatta : This word literally means fish and cooked rice. On any Tuesday or Saturday of the dark fortnight in the lunar month of Pausha, except when there is *panchak*, fish is specially prepared and near ones are invited to the dinner. First of all a plateful of rice and fish is arranged and it is placed at a clean place in a room on the top floor, called *Kaeni*. This is meant for the deity of the house referred to as *Ghar Devata*. The plate is properly covered with an up-turned basket and nearby is placed a glass of water. Some house-holds even serve a raw fish. There are eye witness accounts that the next morning the food is found consumed and even the fish bones are found lying by the side of the empty plate. After placing the plate at the fixed place for the deity, a feast of rice and fish is held along with near and dear ones.

Khyachi Mavas : This is also known as *Yaksha amavasya*. In other words, the last day of the dark fortnight of 'Paush' dedicated to the 'Yaksha', which again appears to refer to some forest-

dwelling tribe that lived there before the rishis. On this day a special dish of moong mixed with rice is prepared in the evening. It is served to the Yaksha on an improvised plate made of dry grass. The plate is placed on the top of the compound wall. The kitchen mortal is placed on a grass ring, worshipped as a symbol of the cosmos and decorated with *sindoor*, sandal, raw rice and flowers. Some households serve fish on this day also. During our childhood we were told that the *Yaksha* would be wearing a red cap while partaking of this *Khichdi* and whosoever is able to snatch away this cap will get riches. So all the children would be eager to get hold of this cap, which eluded everyone.

These are the festivals which apparently were held to satisfy the demands of the aborigines and tribesmen. There is yet another occasion during the bright fortnight of *Marga* or the dark fortnight of *Pausha*, which is described below :

Shishur : This literally means the winter. This is an exclusive occasion for the new born baby and the newly-wed bride. On this day a little lime powder is placed in a piece of 'Zarbaft' cloth and stitched into a small triangular shape. This is then fixed on the cap of the new born or on the side of the sari which covers the head of the bride. The rationale behind this custom is to ward off any evil eye and any ill omen. On this day yellow meat is specially cooked and this along with pan cakes is distributed among the relatives, friends and the neighbours. Scattering the lime powder during winter in order to get rid of the bacteria, insects and bad odour must have been the forerunner of this custom.

Gora-Trai : *Gora-Trai* or *Gauri Tritya* is celebrated on the third day of the bright fortnight of Magha. Gauri is the name of the Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of learning. On this day the family priest brings a portrait of the goddess, below which are printed some shlokas in praise of the goddess. Whenever a child is born or there has been an addition of a bride, the occasion is special and the family priest of the bride's parents also brings a specially decorated portrait and in return gets a handsome honorarium. This must have been the day of teaching the child the first alphabets after offering pooja to the goddess of learning. This is borne out by the fact that the following day is called *Shruka tsoram* or the *Shloka Chaturthi*. Obviously, on this day the child was taught the

basic Sanskrit shlokas like *'Twameva Mata cha Pita twameva* - O Lord, you are my mother as also my father.' This *chaturthi* is also known as 'Tripura Chaturthi' as the goddess is worshipped on this day in her Tripura Sundari form. The goddess is regarded as the energy aspect of the Supreme Divine. It is this aspect of energy that activates the Divine to undertake the five functions of creation, sustenance, destruction, providing cover and granting grace.

Kaw Punim : The full moon of the lunar month *Magha* is also known as *Purnima* of the crow. Two sticks are tied in the shape of a cross and on the open ends of the cross grass is woven to make a long handled flat spoon. Again after some pooja, yellow rice is served on this spoon to be offered to the crow. The children sing a melodious song while making the offering to the crow. The song loosely translated reads thus :

O clever crow;
O, the lover of khichri, crow;
Come to our new house along with your spouse;
Be seated on the threshold of our roof -
And partake of the salty pudding.

This festival is indicative of the love that the Kashmiris have had for the birds and the care they took of them. It may be worth mentioning that every Kashmiri household will scatter some cooked rice on a wooden shelf kept outside the house everyday before serving food to any member of the house. This shelf kept near the top right hand corner of the window is called *Kaw paet* - a shelf for the crow. Likewise every person keeps apart a little rice from his or her plate to be fed to the dogs. This is called *Hoonya myet* - the roll of rice for the dog. This shows the compassionate nature of the Kashmiris for the animal world. No doubt the Gita defines a Pandit as one who treats equally a well read Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a downcast chandala who devours dog-flesh.

Teela Aetham : This is a festival held on the 8th day of the bright fortnight of Phalguna month of the lunar calendar. In effect it is the culmination of the Shivaratri festivities as also bidding adieu to the shivering winter. To begin with, pooja is offered at home and a number of lamps are lit. These lamps are taken to the

river bank and floated on grass bases in the river after the prescribed pooja. Afterwards, old firepots, *Kangris*, are filled with grass. A long rope is tied to its handle and fire is lit in it. Then the *kangri* is moved round and round in circles rhythmically till the whole *kangri* burns down. Then it is hurled far away into the waters of the flowing river. While doing so the children cry out, 'Jatéen téen, Jatéen téen'; meaning that it is a flame, it is burning.

Zetha aetham and Shravana punim : The eighth day of the bright fortnight of Jyeshtha and the full moon day of Shravana are both very auspicious days for the Kashmiri Pandits, the former is dedicated to the Goddess Maharajna and the latter to Lord Shiva. On the Jyeshtha Ashtami devotees assemble at the shrine of Tula Mula. After taking a dip in the waters of the Sindhu, they enter the precincts of the shrine. The marble temple is situated in an L-shaped spring, the waters of which change colour, believed to be the change of the dress by the Mother Goddess. The whole area is full of huge Chinar trees and the stream skirts the area allowing the house boats to anchor there. After individual pooja and a collective *Aarati*, there are night long Bhajans and Kirtan. The refrain of the *Aarati* is *Gaurim-ambam amburuha-akshim-aham-eedey* — I bow to my beautiful mother whose eyes resemble a lotus.' There are Dharmashalas for overnight stay and Yajnashalas for sacrificial fire. Although this shrine is visited by the devotees every month on the eighth day of the bright fortnight, Jyeshtha Ashtami is a special festival for Maharajna, the Consort of Shiva.

On Shravana purnima, while the entire country celebrates 'Raksha Bandhan', in Kashmir we have the world famous pilgrimage to Swami Amarnath cave for the glimpse of the Ice-Lingam, which waxes and wanes along with the growth and decline of the moon. On this day the Kashmiri Pandits collect the holy clay from the Shankaracharya hill, mix mercury with it and make the required number of 'Partheshwaras' for a private *pooja*. They keep fast on this day and immerse the *Partheshwara* in the river waters in the evening. Fasting is an essential aspect of the spirituality of a Pandit. Amavasya, Purnima, Ekadashi, Ashtami are the monthly fasts and, besides, there are occasional ones like Chandan Shashti, Bhimsen Ekadashi, Kali Ashtami, Shiva Chaturdashi, Kumara Shashti and the like. The anniversary day of the parents as also of the sages like Alakheshwari and Rishi Peer are also observed as fast days.

Auspicious days of Ashada : There are four important days in the month of Ashada, called Haar in Kashmiri. The seventh day of the bright fortnight is called Hara Satam. On this day, the courtyard, the front door and the gallery called the *Vuz* are decorated with *Hara Mandul* — a round design made of multi-colour powders. This is to greet the goddess who is expected to grace our houses by her presence. It may be recalled that similar designs are made on the occasion of the weddings and the yajnopavit to greet the bride and the groom and the children who have gone through the Upanayan *samskara*. The nomenclature is different. These are called the *Vyuga*. The decoration made on these occasions on the front gates is also picturesque and is known as *Krule*.

The Kashmiri community is predominantly Shaivite and, therefore, worship Shiva and Shakti. They are grouped into three groups according to their affiliation to three different forms of the Goddess, Maharajna, Sharika and Jwala. The three shrines for them are situated at Tula Mula, Hari Parbat in Srinagar and the hill at the village Khrew, respectively. It is noteworthy that all the three festivals for these forms of the Divine Mother are held in the month of Ashada. On ashtami is the festival of Tula Mula. On navami is the festival at Chakreshwara, Hari Parbat and on Chaturdashi it is at Khrew to worship Goddess Jwala.

Vyatha Truvah : Vitasa or the River Jhelum holds an important position in our religious and cultural life. Most of our famous temples are situated on its banks, noteworthy being Ganesh temple, Mahakali shrine, Somayar - the temple of the Moon, Raghunath Mandir, Batayar, Bokhatakeshwar Bhairav Temple etc. It is not surprising, therefore, that we celebrate the *Pracdurbhava divas* or the appearance days of this life line of Kashmir on the thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of Bhadrapada, for all the ghats of this holy river are sacred for us to perform *Sandhya*, to have a dip and to offer pooja. The river is worshipped by offering water, milk oblations vermillion, raw rice and flowers. People also go for pilgrimage to its source at 'Vyatha Votur' and Verinag. There used to be seven bridges (a couple of bridges have since been added) across this river in Srinagar, from Amira Kadal to Safa Kadal. The banks of this river have been fortified with the huge stone slabs, carved and otherwise, obtained from the destroyed temples during

the Muslim rule, particularly during the reign of Sultan, Sikander, nicknamed as 'Butshikan', the iconoclast, in early forteenth century.

Pan Dyun : *'Ryetav manza ryethah, Baedearpyethah, Venayka Tsoram ta Aathvar'* — The month is Bhadrapada, the day fourth day of the bright fortnight and hopefully a Sunday. This is the festival known all over the country as Ganesh Chaturthi and celebrated in Kashmir in a unique way. Early morning a metal pot is cleaned and placed at a suitable clean place, with some water filled in it. The ladies of the house prepare a sweet pancake called 'Roth'. Poppy seeds are fixed over these on both the sides. The family members sit near the pot and the lady of the house narrates a story of *Beeb garaz Maej*. This story has a moral that by performing *pooja* of Shri Ganesha on this day, preparing sweet pancake and offering the same to the deity, poverty and the miseries of the person are removed and one lives a pious life full of comfort. The story is very similar to the one narrated on the occasion of the *Satya Narayana Pooja*. After listening to the story, all the members fill the pot with flowers and a specific variety of green grass, which they hold in their hands throughout the narration of the story. The sweet pancake prepared on this day becomes the *prashada* and is distributed among relatives, friends and neighbours. Distribution of such things as *Tahaer, Roth, Yogurt*, cakes, walnuts is a common feature of the Kashmiri life and helps make it a close-knit community bound by love, concern and care for each other.

The Sanatan Dharma allows, in addition to the prescribed rituals in accordance with the tenets of the Vedas, observance of additional customs called *Lokachar, Deshachar* or *Gramachar* peculiar to the place and environment one may be living in. This prescription has made marriage, yajnopavit and other ceremonies different for different groups of people in point of detail. Two such customs which are distinct in our community are briefly explained below :

Divagone : Every marriage ceremony and yajnopavit ceremony is preceded by a ritual called *Divagone*. This is to propitiate Surya, Chandra and Brihaspati Devatas to bless the bride or groom to be or the child who is going to adopt the *Yoni* or the yajnopavit. On this occasion, only the bride is asked to wear various gold ornaments including the *Dejhore* which for Kashmiri women

is the symbol of marriage. In other parts of our country, the married ladies are identified by red vermillion in the parting of their hair, Mangalsutra, or the little toe rings. In Kashmir *Dejhore* is the symbol. It is worn in both the ears and there is an attachment to it which is called the *Atahore* made of gold or golden or silver thread made into a specific shape. Before the ritual proper, the bride, groom or the child is given a bath with milk, yoghurt, honey and other such things mixed with water, to the accompaniment of the chanting of Veda-mantras.

Posh puza : At the end of the ritual of marriage, *saptapadi* etc. the bride and the groom are made to sit in a comfortable posture. A red cloth is placed on their heads, and then all the people around offer them flowers in accompaniment of Veda mantras. This is called worshipping the couple with flowers. The rationale behind this custom is that the couple is considered to be Shiva and Parvati and the two are duly worshipped. First there are mantras for the bride and the groom separately followed by those meant for the two jointly. In contrast to this, the newly-weds in the south are required to touch the feet of all the elderly couples present. We are, however, of the view that marriage is a spiritual union between a boy and a girl and they have to live this life of *Artha* (wealth) and *Kama* (desires) with due regard to *Dharma* (righteousness) and aspire for *Moksha* (Emancipation). The four together are called *Purusharthas*. That is why the newly-weds are treated as Shiva and Parvati and worshipped as such at the time of the *Posh Puza*.

Dodh : Literally it means milk but what is implied is yoghurt. Whenever a lady is in the family way, she needs to inform her in-laws so that due care is taken of her health, diet and other comforts. It was difficult for her to convey this news to her in-laws with the same ease with which she could to her mother or sister in her parental home. Therefore, after her parents get the information, she was asked to carry two gadvis (metal pots) full of yoghurt and place one each in front of her father-in-law and mother-in-law. This was meant to be a signal to them that now is the time to take extra care of their daughter-in-law. Alas! this custom has lost its original significance and has turned into a bad social custom. A huge quantity of yoghurt is now-a-days expected to be received from the parents of the girl, which is distributed among the relatives as if to give publicity to the event. A gala

feast is also organised by the family and the lady concerned comes from her parents' home with new dresses and other costly gifts.

Sonder: On the eleventh day of the delivery or on any other suitable date, ladies of the neighbourhood, near relatives and ladies in the house collect in the morning. The mother and the baby are properly bathed and suitably dressed. Thereafter small pieces of *bhojpatra* bark are burnt and lighted barks moved round the heads of the two by turns. A specific folk song is chanted, perhaps to ward off the bad omens and to wish a further safe delivery in due time. This has its origin in the *Punaswan sanskara*, one of the sixteen prescribed in the rule book. These pieces of the bark are then dipped into the water kept in a pot nearby. This is called *Burza Myet*.

Sonth, Navreh and Zanga trai : Sonth heralds the Spring season and the Navreh the New Lunar Year. Both these days are important in our calendar. A unique custom on these two days is to fill a plate overnight with rice, yoghurt, milk, nuts, cake, flower, pen, gold coin, picture of a deity or the goddess, and the new *panchang* (only on Navreh). This is kept covered for the night and early in the morning every member of the family sees this plate and the nice items placed in it, first thing after getting up from the bed. Thereafter people go to the river bank, take a dip and throw these nuts in the water. Then they wear new clothes and offer pooja at home and in the temples. Outings are also organised to the gardens to enjoy the beauty of the almond blossoms. Sweets, savouries and the famous decoction, 'Chai', is served with gaity and happiness all round. On the third day from the Navreh, ladies go to their parents' house and dine there. From there they go to the temples and gardens with their kiths and return in the evening with new dresses and the customary *Noon, Tsocha* and *Atagat* i.e., salt, cakes and some cash. These three items are a must to be given to the married daughters, whenever they come to their parents' house, at the time of their return to their home.

Apart from these customs, rituals and festivals which are peculiar to our community, there are other festivals which are celebrated more or less in the same way as in other parts of the country. Whatever difference there is, is because of geographical reasons and availability of the required items. For example, in our

rituals walnuts, rice and local vegetables are used whereas in other places coconut, banana, banana-leaf and other locally available items are put in use for these rituals. Likewise, due to the intense cold we have *Sandhya* only once in the morning instead of three times elsewhere. Wearning a dhoti or making offerings and pooja bare-bodied also is not enforced in Kashmir for the same reason.

Shivaratri : Any account of the customs and rituals of our community, without a mention of the Shivaratri festival, would be incomplete. This is the crown of our festivals, and is spread over a full fortnight of the Phalguna month. It is a socio-religious function that is the very part of our life. On the first day of the dark fortnight, called *Hurya Okdoh* the wholesale cleaning of the house, painting and decorating begins with gusto. The *pooja* room called *Thokur Kuth* and the front door called *Dar* are specially cleaned, one for the pooja and the other to welcome Shiva and Parvati, whose communion is the real essence of Shivaratri. The first week up to the *Hurya Satam*, is busy time for washing, cleaning and collecting the required items. The eighth day called *Hurya Aetham* is the day of the presiding deity of the valley, Maa Sharika. On this day we have Havan at Hari Parbat and night long Keertan. This is followed by Hurya Navam, Dyara Daham, and Gada Kah. On these days apart from usual pooja, prescribed items of vegetables and/or fish and meat are cooked according to the custom of every home. Ladies go to their parents' house for bathing and washing and return to their own homes with new clothes, a new Kangri (fire-pot) with a silver *tsalan* dangling behind it. Twelfth day is known as *Vager Bah* and it is customary to have Vager pooja on that day, which is the first formal pooja of the Shivaratri. The thirteenth day called *Herach Truvah* is the day of the main pooja. The eldest member of the family keeps fast for the day. Vatuk is brought by the potter which comprises a 'No't', Resh Dul, Dul, Saniwaer, Macha Waer, Dhupu Zur, Sani Potul, assortment of Parva and Taekya. These are cleaned, filled with water and then arranged in the prescribed order in the pooja room. Nariwan and garlands are tied round these items. The No't representing the *Kalasha* and some other pots are also filled with walnuts. The actual pooja begins in the night when all the family members assemble in the pooja room for the purpose. The Vatuk, representing various Devatas and Bhairavas, is worshipped under the directions of the Kula-Purohita (the family priest). This is an

elaborate pooja for a good three hours and is followed by a sumptuous feast. All the items cooked are first offered to the Vatak Nath. Next comes Shiva Chaturdashi. This is popularly called 'Salaam'. Perhaps because on this day friends from the Muslim community would come to felicitate Kashmiri Pandits. Also beggars, bards and street dancers would come to take their due on this festive occasion, and salute the head of the family with the words 'Salaam'. On this day children receive *Heraech Kharch* the pocket allowance for their enjoyment. The usual pastime is a game of shells which creates a lot of enthusiasm. On the Amavasya day the culminating pooja of the festival is held and the entire paraphernalia of Vatuk is taken off from its place. In the evening a very interesting event is observed. It is called *Dub Dub* or knock knock. Actually one member of the family goes out and returns with a glass of water. The door is shut on him and when he knocks at the door a conversation takes place. He is asked who he is. He replies that he is *Ram bror* and has come with wealth, riches, good wishes for health and happiness, food and means of livelihood and all the good things. Then the door is opened. The walnuts are broken to take the kernel out and along with cakes made of rice flour are first offered to the deity and then taken as *prashada*. From the next day begins an arduous task of distributing the walnuts among friends, relatives and neighbours. The closer the relationship the larger is the number of walnuts given to them. The highest number, in hundreds, goes to the in-laws of the newly-wed daughters. The only thing that remains is the disposal of the residual material i.e.; grass seats of the Vatuk, the flowers and Naervan tied round these pots and other such things. These are dropped into the river on the *Tila Ashtami*, and this marks the grand finale to this great festival. It is believed that every Kashmiri girl is a Parvati and is wedded to Shiva. The Shivaratri symbolises the wedding of the two, and on this occasion the Bhairavas and other Ganas accompanying Lord Shiva are fed with choicest dishes up to the fill and to their satisfaction. That is what is known as Vatuk poojan.

This tradition of customs, rituals and festivals gives a distinct identity to the Kashmiri Pandit community and needs to be preserved and nurtured alongwith other important facets of our community life and our beloved mother tongue, Kashmiri, which has been enriched by the writings of Lal Ded and Nunda

Rishi, Habba Khatoon and Arnimal, Parmanand and Shamas Faquir, Masterji, Mehjoor, Azad, Nadim and scores of other poets, writers and thinkers.

These festivals, rituals and customs have had relevance in the past, these are relevant today and they shall remain relevant for all times to come. The relevance is manifold. Firstly, they give us a distinct identity as Kashmiri Pandits. We know about various festivals which are associated with different communities. Durga Puja is for Bengalis what Ganesh Puja is for Maharashtrians. Ayyapa Puja in the south, Holi in the Braja Dham and Jagannath festival in Orissa are very well known. We, in Kashmir, are proud of our socio-religious festival of Shivaratri and other local rituals. Every spring is holy for us, every village has produced a Mahatma of repute and every mountain peak is sacred for us. These festivals and rituals have spiritualised our community for centuries. They have made us god-fearing, non-violent, pious and religious. With all the advancement in science and the technological development, we cannot discard the spiritual aspect of human existence.

After all, our existence is not confined to our gross body alone. These age-old customs of ours help in character building by creating a sense of care and compassion in us. They make us realise our responsibility towards environment, animal world and birds, besides our fellow human beings. These are important props to give us self-confidence, courage to face all eventualities and dynamism in our approach. It is of paramount importance, therefore, for us to preserve and perpetuate these festivals. Their meaning and significance has to be explained to our younger generation in their idiom, cogently and convincingly so that they realise their importance. Carrying forward these traditions is an answer, to a great extent, to our present day problems of stress, strain and tension at the individual level and at the social level of many ills including inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, etc. However, we should not forget that many of these customs are losing their importance because we do not know their underlying significance and the rationale of their observance. This calls for a concentrated effort in the field of research for which our scholars and the knowledgeables should come forward before it is too late and before some meaningful and useful customs get extinct because of non-observance and disuse. This rich tradition of ours

is an indescribable 'Radiance', which is self-illumining, self-satisfying, independent, self-supporting, self-creating, self-rooted and this radiance has to be perceived, realised and then drawn into the depths of ourselves.

is an undescribable "Radiance" which is self illuminating, self satisfying, independent, self-supporting, self-potent, self-perfect and this radiance has to be perceived, realized and then brought into the depths of ourselves.

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After all, our existence is not confined to our gross body alone. These ... [illegible]

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CHAPTER 8

Kashmir Shaivism and Our Times

Virendra Qazi

The philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism occupies a distinguished position among the various schools of religious creed and thought. It provides the complete analysis of human personality and delves into the deepest and most comprehensive psychology of man. In this way, it makes the greatest contribution to furthering of human understanding.

In fact, this universal philosophy focuses on relation between God, Nature and Man, which transcends all the barriers of time, place and diverse human-cultures. It leads to the highest level of self-realisation revealing the inner most secrets of the nature of Self. It integrates all the aspects of life, which are taken in totality. Thus, rather than negation and denial, it celebrates life. Kashmir Shaivism is the only school of Indian philosophy which can inspire us for both material and spiritual progress. Besides making valuable contribution to the Indian culture, it is the highest spiritual philosophy discovered and expressed in the world.

No doubt, Kashmir Shaivism is presently evoking deep interest in west, with lot of pioneering research work at leading universities in Europe and the United States. It is a matter of concern that nothing much is done in the land of its birth, rather land of discovery of this philosophy. We should ponder over this situation and consider the importance of this philosophy in this strife-torn world. A thrill of self confidence, the spirit of bliss,

surpassing all barriers of caste, creed and gender, no look back, no regret, the inner journey, see everything as creation of God, etc. - how prominently and conceptually these are emphasised in Kashmir Shaivism. It should be our solemn endeavour to present this ancient philosophy in common man's language so that a resurgence takes place with the goal of UPLIFTMENT at individual, social, national and world as a whole. We can conclude without any hesitation that Kashmir Shaivism is the religion of tomorrow.

Evolution of Indian Religious Philosophy

It would be pertinent to look at the evolution of Indian religious philosophy. We have Carvakas School which is the basis for lowest type of thinkers in India. Here good health, long life, prosperity, pleasures, enjoyments, etc. are the only aims of this short lived life. They believe socio political systems are needed for the achievement of these aims. There is no heaven, no hell, no piety, no sin, no God, no divine law. Religion, therefore, is not needed at all. This theory is, in fact, the expression of the truth perceived through senses in its grossest and crudest form.

Above the Carvaka school is Mimansaka, which believes in the existence of heaven and hell, admission into which are the results of one's good and bad actions. Vaisnava school believes that there is a still more superior place named *Vaikuntha*. Above them are *Nyaya* and Vaisesika philosophies which believe in soul, time, space, law of karma, omniscient and omnipotent *Isvara* and *Parmatam*. The finer exposition of the truth is in *Sankhya* and Yoga philosophies.

Jardust and Vedvyas

If we take a detour and go outside Bharat Desh, we can observe development of various philosophies and interaction of many a religious creed. In the ancient Iran, King Gastasp invited an Indian Brahman, Vyas by name, for "Shastrarth" (religious discourse) with his Raj Guru Jardust. The Parsi holy book "Shoteer", gives detailed account of this interaction and praises Vyas as a very wise and learned scholar of the time.

Anal Haq

The various religious creeds strived for universality as is quite evident in Sufism. The revolution was created by Hazrat Mansoor. He was humiliated, made to ride a donkey through the streets and finally hanged and his corpse burnt. His fault - Anal Haq (I am truth, God). However, in deep humiliation he addressed to people "Forget not God to see my plight, Trust in Him. He is with me like a friend. He gives me a cup which He took first Himself".

The Almighty Lord - From whom emanates everything and who is beyond all diversities

After this detour, let us come back to our present world. Don't we see a revolution - World has become one family. We talk of communication, networking and we have surmounted all barriers that separate man from man. Similarly, people can choose their own creed, interact, analyse, approve and go their own way. However, in spite of all this, we are pained at the violent diversity and discord in the world. We are still confronted with the issue of caste, creed, language, religion and other man-made barriers.

Coming to the relevance of Kashmir Shaivism for our times, how would we describe our present day world? Some call it a great paradox, beyond anybody's comprehension. Perhaps we are unable to follow this maze? There are two phases which are quite explicit. The first one is a deep despair. Indeed, it is a deep despair which confronts us constantly. No achievement seems to satisfy us. Right from the beginning we chase the daily minimum needs and spend or waste our entire life in it. Those we feel are lucky are truly worse. They have more of dissatisfaction, insecurity, lust for upward move, prone to scheming and outside attacks.

Now, the second phase. Really! can this world be all that bad. Daily we can experience the morning Sun, which blesses us and dispels all darkness. The love of near and dear ones sustains us. The beauty of nature, ever motivating and ever fascinating, thrills us.

What can we conclude from these opposite, rather totally diverse explanations. It seems we have no answer? So let us take

recourse to the wisdom of our ancient seers-our ancient knowledge. The message is : good and bad are part of the same coin. Everything emanates from the Almighty Lord, the Param Shiva. And recognition of this creed means Liberation.

Param Shiva and His Universal Manifestation

Param Shiva is the ultimate reality who is the nature of Bliss itself and all complete in Himself. He is beyond description, beyond all manifestation, beyond limitation of form, time and space. He is eternal, infinite, all pervading, all knowing and all powerful. In fact, this reality is ineffable and beyond all descriptions.

From Param Shiva let us come to universal manifestation; let us have a look at this creation of Lord. Kashmir Shaivism postulates 36 categories of "tattvas" to explain the process of cosmic evolution. Let us keenly focus our attention to this process of universal evolution or universal experience, i.e., from God hood to Maya Shakti which is the veiling or obscuring force of nature leading to psycho - physical elements and finally the Panch Mahabhutas - five great elements : Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether. Let us look further into this great descent or the process of in-evolution, i.e. from God-hood to Manhood.

Shiva Tattva

The first outward manifestation of the divine creative energy in the process of cosmic evolution is called Shiva - Tattva. It is the initial creative movement of Paramasiva. Consciousness in this condition is technically called *chit*. Further, it is the static aspect of consciousness or like support of all things in the manifest world. It is like the bed of a river or the canvas of a painting. It can never be seen, it can only be known by its effects. In this condition, the emphasis is on the subject without any awareness of the existence of the object. The Shiva Tattva is the *chit* aspect of the universal condition of Sat-Chit-Ananda.

Shakti Tattva

Since the Shiva Tattva represents the passive aspect of the pure consciousness, it is dependent upon the active or dynamic aspect to bring it into being. This is called Shakti Tattva. Shakti is

the active or kinetic aspect of consciousness. Just as an artist pours out his delight in a poem, picture or song, even so the Supreme pours out his delight in this manifestation called Shakti. Just as Shiva is the *chit* aspect of the universal condition of Sat-Chit-Ananda, Shakti is the Ananda aspect. When Shakti is predominant, supreme bliss is experienced. As Mahesvarananda puts it beautifully in Maharthamanjari : "He (i.e. Shiva) Himself full of joy enhanced by the honey of the three corners of his heart, viz *Iccha, Jhana and Kriya*, raising up His face to gaze at His own splendour is called Shakti".

This Shakti Tattva represents the force that produces a strain or stress on the surface of the universal consciousness. It polarizes consciousness into positive and negative, the *aham* and *idam*, the subject and object. As mentioned, Shakti or cosmic energy is said to have three principal forms to account for the three fundamental psychological steps that precede every action. Technically the first one is called *Ichcha Shakti*, the power of feeling oneself as supremely able and of an absolutely irresistible will. Second one is the *Jnana Shakti*, the power of knowledge or knowing of consciousness which holds all objects in conscious relations with our self and also with one another. The *Kriya Shakti* is the power of supreme action, creating or assuming any and every form. One follows the other in logical succession, and with the prominence of each respective form in the process of the evolution of consciousness, the next three *tattvas* come into being. These are respectively called Sadashiv Tattva, Ishvara Tattva and Shuddha Vidya Tattva.

Maya and Five Kancukas (Coverings)

Now let us come to the evolution of material universe. The power of consciousness to separate and divide is called Maya Shakti. This is the power to perceive differences. The term "Maya" means illusion. Here it is used to refer to the veiling or obscuring force of nature which creates a sense of differentiation. As such, it makes universal consciousness which is unity, appear as duality and multiplicity.

The products of Maya are the five kancukas or coverings which are *Kalaa* (limitation of authorship or efficacy) *Vidya* (limited knowledge), *Raga* (from all satisfaction to feeling of interest and

desire) *Kaala* (from eternity to limitation in respect of time i.e. past, present and future) *Niyati* (limitation in respect of cause and effect).

Purusha and Prakriti

The result of Maya and its five coverings as referred above are *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. Here the dual world of mind and matter is permanently established. In other words, although the Lord is absolutely free, he puts on Maya and her five cloaks, forgets His true nature, limits His power and reduces Himself to an individual soul which is called *Purusha* and its objective manifestation *Prakriti*.

Buddhi, Ahamkara and Manas

Now, let us come to the tattvas of mental operation i.e. *Buddhi, Ahamkara* and *Manas*. *Buddhi* is the ascertaining intelligence which can be external i.e. a jar perceived through eye or internal, like images built out of the impression left on mind. *Ahamkara* is the product of *buddhi*. It is the I -making principle and the power of self-appropriation. *Manas* is the product of *ahankara*. It co-operates with the senses in building up perceptions, and by itself, it builds images and concepts.

We are continuing to focus on the cosmic manifestations. The products of *Ahamkara* are five powers of sense perception or *Jnanendriyas*, five powers of action or *Karamendriyas* and five primary elements of perception or *Tanmantras*. The process of in-evolution is complete finally with *panch Mahabutas* as referred to earlier.

Frankly, very important position is given to Ahankara. In fact, it is the product of *Shakti* through the intermediate Prakriti which obviously is a mode of the Divine Energy. *Rajas gunas* is prominent here and other *gunas* are in subdued form. One can understand the significance of *Ahankara* by the story of the Buddha Bhikshu Upasena. As he tried to overcome this *tattva* by his "sadhana", his body got scattered because there was no *Ahankara* up-holding it.

It is Important to understand that, according to Kashmir Shaivism, this analysis of all phenomena into thirty-six *tattavas* has been worked out as a tool of understanding for the ever-active and inquiring mind and as a form for contemplative meditation. At higher *sadhana*, the number of *tattvas* may get reduced. Finally a highly advanced Shiva Yojin may see only the Shiva Tattva in the whole of creation.

Doctrine of the Four Stages in the Manifestation of Speech

The above description is an endeavour of movement from individuality to universality. In this context, it is interesting to mention about four types of speech. Speech is not only the means to convey one's ideas to others, it is also a way to understand things personally. When we choose to convey ideas to others, we generally use spoken language, known as *Vaikhari*. A finer form of speech that serves as the medium for thinking and understanding, through which a person forms definite and indefinite ideas about words and their meanings, is the mental speech called *Madhyama*. It is an internal reflection of manifestation of awareness taking the form of ideas. There is a still finer level of speech, far subtler in character and resides in the inner-most part of our being. It is called *Pasyanti*. It is known as the "be-holding speech" because through its medium enlightened people can behold all objective existence within themselves. Beyond this is *Paravac* the supreme speech or the transcendental speech. This consists of pure awareness of the self. It is also called *Paravani*.

This doctrine can also be understood by the example of an artist's creation from the grossest to the finest level. His tangible creation like a painting, etc. can be *Vaikhari* and the images formed mentally, where his creation shines within him in the form of *Madhyama*. Before even this exists a subtle creative urge like a stir, or restlessness or inward flutter which is *Pasyanti*. Finally, at the most subtle level, the original seed of the artistic creation lies in the inner most center which is shining as *Paravac*, the Supreme speech.

Bondage

After discussing the cosmic manifestation in the form of *tattvas* and speech, let us come to bondage and liberation as per Kashmir Shaivism.

From the absolute point of view there is no bondage, yet when the Lord manifests as limited due to His own free will, He forgets His own perfection and becomes bound. In other words, bondage is nothing more than an individual's self-forgetfulness or ignorance of his own perfection. Even in the state of apparent limitation he remains pure and perfect although he is unaware of it. For the purpose of divine sport, the Absolute voluntarily accepts the limitation of self-consciousness, which gives rise to limited desires. Because of these limited desires, the finite self performs various finite actions and experiences their consequences. Thus, the chain of karma leads the individual from bondage to bondage.

Three Malas (Impurities)

This limitation which constitutes the essential nature of the finite self is called *Mala*, which means impurity or taint. It is a manifestation of divine free will and is of three kinds. Anava Mala is the primary or innate ignorance of the individual soul. It reduces the universal consciousness to a limited aspect. *Mayiya Mala* is the limited condition brought about by *maya*. *Karma Mala* is the limitation in the power of action. *Anava Mala* leads to *Karma Mala*, e.g. good or evil actions. This leads to *Mayiya Mala* which brings about the experience of pleasure, pain, birth and death due to the *vasanas* or habit energies of good and evil actions. It is the force of the *vasanas* that carries the *jivas* from one life to another.

Liberation

It is natural that we must strive from bondage to liberation. Liberation, according to Kashmir Shaivism, means *Pratyabhijna* or recognition of one's true nature which means the original, pure I - consciousness. This pure I-consciousness is immediate, non-relational awareness. To be integrated to the divine I is liberation. As Abhinavagupta puts it "*Moksa for Liberation* is nothing else but the awareness of one's true nature". The Highest Attainment,

however, is that of Shiva Consciousness in which the Entire Universe appears as I - Consciousness.

Shaktipat and Trika Yoga

We must remember that it is not simply by intellectual understanding that one gains awareness of true I -consciousness. There has to be *shaktipata* - the descent of divine grace.

In order to earn grace, one has to undergo spiritual discipline. This is known, as *upaya* or Yoga. Here we would draw a line between two prevalent systems of Yoga in ancient India and Trika Yoga of Kashmir. Ancient India had Yoga for monks like Patanjali Yoga and Hatha Yoga and Yoga for householders which had evolved into various forms. Trika Yoga, on the other hand, is free from all stringent restrictions and repressive discipline. It discourages torturing the body and mind or starving the senses. Abhinavagupta, calling on the authority of his greatest preceptor, Sambhunatha, clearly states that the senses can only give up their fascination for wordly enjoyments through a spontaneous indifference arising from the blissful experiences that Yoga elicits. In other words, once a practitioner has discovered the inner bliss of the self, all the common sense pleasures will seem inadequate by comparison and will, therefore, no longer be a temptation. He adds that the senses are liable to adverse reactions if these are forcibly controlled.

Let us further define Yoga as per Trika system. As per *Malinivijayatantra*, "The unity of one (a finite being) with another (Almighty God) is called Yoga by Siva Yogins".

The Yoga or *Upayas* as per Kashmir Shaivism are divided under four heads having relevant emphasis viz (1) *Anupaya* (*ananda* or Bliss) (2) *Sambhavopaya* (*Iccha*) (3) *Saktopaya* (*Jyana*) (4) *Anavopaya* (*Kriya* or action). These *upayas* or means have been so categorised as supreme means, medium means or inferior means, depending upon the individual potential.

As already mentioned, grace of God, i.e., *Shaktipata* is independent of human effort. The Yoga of Patanjali starts from lowest type and ends with those of the highest type so that practitioner is led step by step into highest type of samadhi. But

Abhinabvagupta starts in his Tantraloka with the highest type of Yoga and comes down gradually to lower type of its practices. He is of the view that aspirant should catch hold of the highest practice and should try it. If, however, he feels that he is not capable of treading the highest path, he can come down to the path nearest to it. One may in this way come down to any lower path in accordance with his psychological capabilities.

Fourth Upayas (Means)

Anupaya

The first one is *Anupaya*. It is immediate through speediest descent of grace. Therefore, Diksha (initiation) has practically no role. In this path to liberation no active process on the part of the individual is involved. An aspirant has only to observe that nothing is to be done. Be as you are: only reside in your being. This is attributed to *Ananda Sakti* of Siva and is also called *Anandopaya*. Here we can quote from famous Shaiva saint of Kashmir - Pandit Krishan Joo Razdan :-

Oh Lord! With your speediest Grace;
Make me transcend all - Will, Knowledge & Action

Shambhavopaya

It is also called *Icchopaya* because it comes about by a mere orientation of the will. It is designed for advanced aspirants, who by meditating on the Shiva Tattva, attain the highest level of awareness. In this path, will predominates. It involves the practice of maintaining the constant awareness that the universe is nothing but *Chiti*. Even this must ultimately be transcended. Thus all mental activities stop and mind shines without any flutter of ideas. The light of pure consciousness alone shines in such practice and an aspirant discovers the pure transcendental aspect of his self in that state. All this happens by means of intuition and not by means of thinking or understanding capacities, both of which become absorbed in the pure lustre of consciousness of the self in that state. A certain type of bodily posture, as described in the sixth chapter of Bhagavadgita, becomes helpful in the beginning of the practice of this Yoga, but it is not required afterwards.

The same Yoga and mudra have also been depicted in the poetry of Kalidasa in the third canto of his *Kumarsambhava*.

Shaktopaya

If a person feels that he is not capable to succeed in the practice of *sambhopaya*, he can try *Saktopaya* which has its position just below it. It is also called *Jnana Upaya*. Here the primary concern is to realise the self through knowledge, meditation and contemplation of ideas such as "*Shivoham*" (I am Siva). Mental activity plays an important role in this *upaya*. A regular practice in mental repetition of the exactly correct nature of the real self leads to pure and limitless consciousness in one self. Thus, a person having attained perfection in Sakta Yoga, attains the *Sakta Samavesa* of Sivahood and becomes fit for the practice of *Sambhava Yoga*.

Anavopaya

We are discussing the practice of Yoga as per individual's capacities. For those who are not competent to practice the two higher type of Yoga, there is *Anavopaya*. Anu means the psychological self, the mind body complex and this Yoga is useful to those beings who live in the field of *maya*. It is also called Kriya Yoga because mental activity of meditation dominates its practice. Certain objective elements are taken as the targets of meditation in this Yoga and they are imagined to be identical with Param Shiva and in this way a practitioner feels his omnipresence. Some of these objective elements are nearer to one's self and some are farther and the *Anava Yoga* is of several categories on this account, like *budhi* being nearest to self, then *prana*, the life force, then *deha*, the physical body and still further *sthana*, the phenomenal universe consisting of time, space and the elements which have their place in them.

Dhyana Yoga

Dhyana Yoga is the form of *anava yoga* which is practiced with contemplative meditation on *budhi*. The word *'dhyana'* means contemplation. There are different forms of *dhyana*. For example, you are practising *dhyana* when you contemplate on the lotus in your heart, or on the meaning of some mantra such as "*So-ham*".

Uccara Yoga

The word *"Uccara"* means "breathing". *Uccara* actually means concentration on the breath, the power of life force - *Prana*, whose functions vary depending on whether we are awake, asleep, in a transcendental state, and so on. One is supposed to meditate upon this phenomenon with the understanding that they are nothing other than one's own inner self. With practice one withdraws one's attention from the body and the mind, and focuses on the most subtle elements of pure power of *prana / aprana* working in its functions. This technique is quite popular with Buddhists. They have adopted it extensively. It is considered simple as compared to other techniques.

Karana Yoga

The term *karna* denotes the physical body, particularly "sense organs" which are to be made the target of contemplative meditation. Physical postures are to be accompanied by special form of contemplation which will help students realize the absolute divinity of their own nature.

Sthana Kalpana

It is meditation on entities outside the person like on some particular place along with contemplation of non-dualistic theism. The two objects used are time and space. This Yoga carries practitioners out of the limitations of time and washes its impression and they develop an impression of eternity which becomes one with their essential nature. The practitioners realize that they are eternal.

Ritual performance of many types of initiation (*Diksa*) are also considered to be aids to Trika Yoga, especially for an aspirant of lesser ability. That helps him in acquiring greater ability to practice any type of the above mentioned Yoga. Details regarding that ritual have been discussed in detail in Tantraloka, the gist of which is given in Tantrasara.

Vigyan Bhairav Tantra

It is a very ancient book on Yoga. It goes directly to the heart of the problem of the union of human consciousness with

the Divine, avoiding mechanical worship, external rites and ceremonies. It is a precious gem delineating the mystic approach to the Divine. For this purpose, it makes full use of all the aspects of human life - *prana, manas*, imagination and intuition. It contains 112 types of yoga. There is hardly any other book on yoga which has described so many ways of approach to central reality that is present in each man as his essential self.

Special Features of Saiva Yoga

It should be noted that Saiva Yoga is not a practice in suppression of the functions of mind as taught by Patanjali. It is a practice in uniting the individual with universal by means of interesting and blissfull practices as taught in Saiva scriptures. In fact, out-wardly one may perform the age old, traditional or vedic rituals but inwardly, he has to seek the exact truth through some yogic practices taught in Trika System. Maintaining the semblance of an ordinary householder he has not to make any show of the powers aroused through its practice. There is no restriction based on caste, creed, gender etc. in eligibility for initiation in the Saiva yoga. Even a lowest caste can become a disciple or even a preceptor if he attains sufficient success in this practice.

Devotion for Lord

Finally, rather concluding, the only condition for *Saiva Yoga* is devotion and urge. Devotion is an essential aid to all the practices. An aspirant not blessed with devotion for the Lord can not succeed in the practice of *Saiva Yoga*. The highest knowledge of the absolute monism has been termed as the highest devotion.

Here, we can refer to Utpaladeva, who commands the greatest reverence not only for his philosophic insight or poetic genius but also for his supreme devotion to the Lord. His *Sivastotravali* can rightly be called as ocean of devotion.

Specific features of Kashmir Shaivism

At this stage, let us have a little summing up regarding specific features of Kashmir Shaivism. Indeed, it is a religio-philosophical system elaborated mostly in the *Pratyabhijna Darsana*, which means re-cognition of self. Siva voluntarily adopts self-veiling and becomes a *jiva*. The problem for the *jiva* is to

recognise his self as Siva. The Pratyabhijna philosophy first gives a description of ultimate reality, shows how it descends to the level of the *jiva* or empirical individual and how the *jiva* can recognise himself as Siva and become liberated.

Comparing to the Vedanta philosophy of Samkara, it accepts the cosmic manifestation in totality. Some religious thinkers say "Kashmir Shaivism accepts a great challenge". *Cit* or Brahman is both *prakasha* and *Vimarsha* i.e. light and activity. Maya is Siva-Mayi: Divine and perfectly real. The universe is not *mithya*. The universe is *Siva-rupa* and therefore real. It is a display of the glory of the Divine.

Kashmir Shaivism adopts a realistic and utilitarian attitude. It relies on three fold authority of (a) the divine scriptures (b) experienced preceptors and (c) One's own intuitive self-experiences to which the highest importance has been given. In fact, an aspirant is allowed to adopt any system of practice in accordance with his individual psycho - physical aptitudes.

Lingoddhara - Diksa

This is a very special feature of Kashmir Shaivism. As per 17th chapter of *Tantrasara* of Abhinavgupta, a man of another religious denomination can, if he so desires, be initiated in Shaivism after being freed from his former belief. This has also been explained in detail in 22 and 23 chapter (*Ahnika*) of *Tantraloka*.

Definition

Now, let us have a clear delineation regarding the definition of Kashmir Shaivism :

Kashmir Shaivism is a process of discovery of individual soul as one with the Universal Being through a process based on:

1. Correct knowledge of the exact nature of universal elements.
2. Practice in Trika Yoga.
3. A highly affectionate and devotional attitude towards the Absolute Reality.

We have discussed in detail the above three basis of this philosophy, i.e., 36 cosmic manifestations or *Tattvas*, *Trika Yoga* or *upayas* and the great stress on devotion to Lord.

Relevance of Kashmir Shaivism

Before summing up the relevance of this philosophy, let us have a look at the Indian philosophy in general. It is a fact that no nation can achieve its desired national aims without the help of a suitable philosophy. A deep rooted philosophy can urge and inspire a nation towards its national aims. The ancient Indian philosophy took comprehensive view of human life and was practicable in that ancient social set up, served well for thousands of years and India continued to be a prosperous country flourishing in religion and philosophy. However, subsequently, impact of many great thinkers have led us from faith to reasoning, practice to theory, etc. We were taken from a practical path of all round progress towards an idealistic path of mere theories and suitable only for few people. The result of this idealistic approach by rulers and thinkers has been invasion and destruction at the hands of more practical and powerful foreigners.

Kashmir Shaivism is the only school of Indian philosophy which can inspire us for both material and spiritual progress. It can serve as a sound basis for our national aims of establishing a welfare state. This philosophy is to be presented in the present day style in the light of the psychology of the youngest generations of our nation. The message for them is that world should be accepted in totality. No problem of society, state, nation and individual is to be ignored. A person cannot succeed in any aim of life if he shuts his eyes towards these problems. The whole life of Lord Krishna, as depicted in Mahabharata, is a glowing example of practical Shaivism.

As a pious house holder, we have to enjoy tasteful worldly objects within the limits laid down by traditional social laws and go on practising Saiva Yoga side by side. Having attained success in the Yoga and relished the blissful experience of self-awareness, one loses interest in worldly enjoyments. This leads to self-recognition and experience of one's practical Godhead.

Be in world - yet away from it. As an elder person, we have to set such an example and create an inspiration for others. Here, it would be very pertinent to narrate an incident of a realised soul, a house holder. He was an elderly noble soul engrossed in his *Sadhna* most of the time. During the evening people would interact with him, join the prayer, followed by little *"prasad"*.

A bright young man had an enlightening experience with him. It started with a doubt. Why this holy man is interfering with the cosmic process ?. During distribution of *"prasad"*, the people would narrate their urgent family concerns to which he would reply "Mother Durga will solve your problem".

One day this young man could express his doubt as he could find a moment alone with him. The noble person explained. "Look, my dear son, I am not living in some forest or hillock. I consider all the people around as my family members. I only direct their attention to God, the eternal Guide, who can give us the real wisdom to bear pleasure or pain."

"Perhaps you are not satisfied", he continued looking at his doubtful countenance. He directed him to get up and reach for the broom which was at the farthest end of the room, hidden behind the door, "Dear, have a close look at the broom", he suggested. "I can see circle of threads tied around" the young man observed.

"I have since mastered the *Ashta Siddhis* (the eight supernatural powers) which are tied with the broom and kept at the farthest corner of the room", the holy man continued, "I feel you are a bright deserving young man. You verily require my blessings. Please ask any help or *"aashirvad"* and this broom will grant you". The young man could, thus, realise the ' level of attainment' of this holy man, who knew the real meaning of attachment and detachment.

Lalleshwari - Her Spiritual Gems

While expounding the relevance of Kashmir Shaivism, our deepest gratitude goes to Lalleshwari, whose teachings give a unique opportunity to have an insight into this mystic philosophy.

She conveyed its essence in a simple way for the benefit of the humanity.

Emanating from the basic creed of Kashmir Shaivism, she stresses positive acceptance of the material world rather than the philosophy of escapism. We can rather say that God has made man in His own image. It is His own Maya Shakti which makes man to see differently. Therefore, real joy can be gained as we live in this world and go about our work. Avoiding suppression and denial like great puritans, we should exercise moderation in living and turning away from the ambition of wealth, power and pleasures of senses. This will prepare us for the inward journey to realize God.

We can, indeed, get the spiritual thrill by reproducing a few mystical outpourings of her heart :-

Grace of God is Independent of Human Effort

Some Thou pushed towards Bliss Thyself!
Some struggled very hard!
Some got drunk and obsessed :
Some one's *Sadhna* ended in Vain!

To Realise him overcome the barriers

Shiva abides in all that exists anywhere;
Do not discriminate between a Hindu and a Musalman ;
If you are wise, recognize your true Self ;
That is the true awareness of God.

Do not escape the world

Some renounced their homes, some the hermitages ;
stay as you are and be firm in your mind.
Thereby you will get established in the Self ;
What is the good of smearing ashes.

Moderation in Living

Overeating will not permit you reach the goal ;
Willful abstention from food makes you conceited.
Eat moderately to be a normal person ;
Moderate eating would surely lead to unbolting
of the Gates!

Look for the God within

Looking for the mystic Moon within me;
It was—like searching for the like.
I found Narayana (Shiva) permeating everywhere/ everything;
Why this sport of diversity. Oh Lord!

On Kundalini

Crossing the Six Forests, came the *Sheshikala* oozing,
The *Prakriti* was sacrificed (burnt out) with the air (*Prana*).
With the fire of love, I roasted my heart,
Thus *Shiva* was realized by me.

Bliss

I, Lalla, entered through the garden - gate of my soul ;
There, O Joy! I found *Shiva* united with *Shakti*.
Overwhelmed, I got immersed in Lake of Nectar.
Even though alive or dead, what can existence do unto me!

CONCLUSION

Let us work for upliftment as our goal. With our own self - effort we should change and strive for enlightenment. Let this change permeate from man to family, to state and nation as a whole. Leading to universal good this will usher in a peaceful and conflict free world.

CHAPTER 9

Kashmiri Literature : The Source of My Inspiration

(Translated from Hindi by Dr. S.S. Toshkhani)

Shambhu Nath Bhatt 'Haleem'

I would like to begin my statement with a true anecdote from my childhood. I was an eleven or twelve year old student of a village secondary school and was about to enter high school when a close relation of ours came to visit us. A Patwari by profession, he related to us details of a conversation he had heard in a village and told us that followers of the Ahmadiya sect, or Mirzais as they are generally known, set apart one week in a year for preaching. One such group of Ahmadiya preachers visited a nearby village for missionary work. There they went to a gathering of Kashmiri Pandits and asked them some religious questions. Perhaps the Pandits failed to give satisfactory answers to the questions that were put to them. Giving his own comments on the incident, the Patwari remarked that had there been an "Arya" in the gathering, he would have silenced the Ahmadiyas by giving them satisfactory and logical answers. This thing sunk deep in my childlike heart. What is meant by an "Arya", I wondered. If he is not a creature too different from ordinary human beings, then I too would like to become someone who is capable of giving logical answers to questions. Incidentally, I soon came to know that answers to many such questions could be found in 'Satyarth Prakash', a book written by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj. Somehow, I managed to get this book and some other reading material from somewhere.

That is how my curiosity about religion and literature began. The event made me interested in gathering more and more information about culture. As a country lad born in a Kashmiri Pandit lower middle class family, I inherited religious faith because of my *samskaras*. However, I did not have the means to satisfy my growing curiosity. I had to undergo quite a few hardships before I found ways to gratify my desire.

Let me once again revert to my childhood days just to say that the paradisal and sacred land where I was born is so exceedingly beautiful that one could get one's wishes fulfilled there without much effort or hard work. I was no exception. I too drank this ambrosia of the natural beauty of my homeland to the fill. And it was in this process that I visited many religious places of my sacred land. Simultaneously, due to my good fortune, I also came to know about the literary and cultural heritage for which this heaven on earth is known throughout the world. Notable among these works were "Satuch Kahvat" (A Kashmiri play on King Harishchandra), "Harihar Kalyan" (A collection of Krishna Razdan's poems), "Ramavtar Charit" (by Prakashram Kurigami), "Krishnavtar" (by Man Joo Attar). Apart from this, reading from religious texts was an integral part of our daily routine.

I first got an inkling of this glorious heritage at Lahore when the Professor of Philosophy of my college told me that the sacred land of Kashmir was a fountainhead of infinite knowledge. Whenever his eyes fell on me in the class, he would at once say, "Shambhu, son, you are fortunate to have been born in Kashmir, a land where every inch is extremely beautiful and is full of infinite wisdom and learning." Whenever he would think of Kashmiri scholars like Bilhana, Anandavardhana, Mammata, Kayyata, Udbhatta, Shaiva masters like Utpaldeva, Vasugupta, Shivaswami and Kshemaraja, and chroniclers like Kalhana, his eyes would shine with a strange gleam in them. And when he was lost in his reveries, I would be rendered speechless by what he said. I would be always looking for an opportunity to have a dip in the sacred river of knowledge.

This was the second stage of my getting inspired by the greatness of Kashmiri literature and culture. Where the struggle of life took me thereafter is a different story, entirely personal.

Though I did not have the opportunity to live in Kashmir for much time, Kashmir always remained uppermost in my mind. To my lot fell that period of world history when during the stormy days of the Second World War, India's freedom movement reached its peak. Worldwide destruction along with the terrible famine in Bengal, the callous barbarity of British imperialism, the worsening plight of Indian princedoms and the flames of communal strife fanned by imperialist conspiracies were the developments that were turning the pages of history red with blood. And all of us were unfortunate witnesses of these horrible happenings. Just then the Quit India movement began to bear fruit. Soon after the world war ended, the time of the country's partition and the climax of its freedom struggle drew near.

Kashmir could not remain untouched by these developments. Here too an atmosphere of conflict prevailed. But this is something that concerns history.

I did not have to do anything directly with politics but culture and literature had a greater impact on me. One of the popular slogans of those days was that the objective of our independence was establishment *of swarajya* and renaissance of Indian culture. I came to like this slogan as I felt that this was the way to water the roots. It is with this that our uplift, our glory and progress are linked. Unless the two wheels of worldly progress and traditional upliftment move smoothly, it will be futile for us to hope for complete development.

The Kashmir that lulled me to sleep in my childhood with its folk songs as lullabies, that stirred the chords of my heart with the sweet music of its great traditions and that awakened me with the profound teachings of its saints and savants — now the longing and desire to get linked again with those bonds emerged with greater intensity.

Fortunately, when I was studying I had the company of people who made it possible for me to come into contact with the original sources of our civilization and culture. Not only this, I was introduced to other religions, cultures and civilizations also. Alongwith my regular curriculum, I also came to know that the original source of our faith was very ancient — its range extending

to Vedas and Vedangas, the Smritis, Puranas, philosophy, Upanishads, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Tantras and Agamas. Apart from these, Kashmir has enriched Sanskrit literature with such priceless gems before which all scholars have bowed their heads. What is more, even advanced eastern and western countries are indebted to this great body of knowledge. That is why it has been said:

Etaddésha prasutasya sakshadagragan manah
Swam-swam charitram shiksheram prithivyam sarva manavah

[It is from the great scholars born in this country that all people in the world learnt how to improve their conduct.]

Going deeper into the matter, I came to know that even Western research has proved that Rigveda is the first and the oldest book in the world. It is due to the divine origin of the Vedas that this nation has been in the forefront in the field of civilization and culture. Apart from *Devabhasha* (the language of the gods), the heritage of this land includes literary works written in the language of the common people also, as for instance, Gunadya's Brihatkatha, the Panchatantra, Kathasaritasagara and Hitopadesha.

The divine origin of the Vedas and the usefulness of the Tantras led to two revelations: one that knowledge and science are not the monopoly of any particular person but a gift of God; and secondly, creation is a continuous process, and inexorable too. By remaining in this world alone can one desire improvement or progress.

For achieving this goal Vedas have clear instructions for every man: "Manurbhava" — Be a man! And as a way to achieve this ideal, the purpose of Dharma has been explained in the Vedas as follows:

Stutam maya varda Vedamata Prachodayantam pavamanam dwijanam
Ayuh pranam prajam pashum kirtim dravinam
Brahma varchaswam mahyam datva vrajat Brahmalokam

[The boon-giving, inspiring Mother of the Vedas, purifier of the twice-born, is hereby presented by me so that after obtaining

longevity and producing offspring while in good health, men can seek cattle wealth, fame, material prosperity and pure greatness; and then by dedicating all this material prosperity to God, they can attain Brahmaloka or that supreme status in which there is no difference between the Supreme Being and man.]

To attain this supreme status, the Mother of the Vedas (Gayatri) reminds us constantly that we should always ask for increasing power of intelligence, as intelligence is the basis of every kind of power.

And this verse of the Vedas indicates where *Vipras* or persons endowed with such intellect take birth:

Upahware girinam sangamanam dhiya vipro ajayata

(Rigveda)

[In the caves, on the mountains, at the confluence of rivers are *Vipras* or persons endowed with power of intelligence born.]

The sacred land resuscitated from the waters of Satisar was an ideal place in this context. Here we have Guphawara, Guphabal, the Amamath Swami cave, the caves at Bumzu and Burzahama, Beeru the *cave-samadhi* of Abhinavagupta, not to speak of the cave at Kaimuh where Nund Rishi did his penance — all these showing how true and meaningful these lines of the Vedas are.

It was on this very land that Mother Sharada was worshipped :

Namaste Sharade devi Kashmirpur vasini
twamaham prarthaye nityam vidya danam twam dehi me

[I bow to you O Sharada (Goddess of Learning) who
resides in Kashmir
I pray to you everyday to bestow on me the boon of
learning]

And it is on the Pradyumna Peetha here that Rajarajeshwari Mother Sharika killed Jalodbhava and revealed the essence of the Tantras at Chakreshwari whose effulgence illumines the way for the deliverance of the world.

It was here that the union of Shiva and Shakti led to the revelation of the Trika doctrine with its lofty edifice standing on the four pillars of Spanda, Pratibhijna, Kaula and Krama.

It is here that the river Vitasta mentioned in the Vedas emerges and flows without any obstruction. It was in the form of water of this river that Mother Paravati gave the land of Kashyapa ambrosia to drink. It was here that Lord Shiva gave the boon of immortality through Amar Katha, after receiving which the great Yogini Lalleshwari rendered in her mother tongue Kashmiri this message of the Bhagvadgita—

Na twewaham jatunasam na twam neme janadhipah
Na chaiva na bhavishyamah sarve vayamatah param

[There never was such a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings, nor in the future shall any of us cease to be]

This finds expression in the following Vaak of Lalleshwari:

Asi aasy tu asi dsav
Asi dor kar patavath
Shivas sori na yun tu gatsun
Ravas sori na ata gath

[It is we who existed in the past and it shall be we who
shall exist in the future also.
For ages we have been coming and going
Shiva shall never cease to come and go.
The sun shall never cease to rise and set]

This divine expression of optimism that echoes what the Lord has said is an eternal truth, having its basis in Kashmir Shaivism which holds that if Shiva pervades the universe then how can its internal and external form be an illusion? Shivatantra is thus a bridge of hope which can never be destroyed even if the tidal waves of the ocean of existence rise high above it. The truth of materialism's attractions blended with the "rit" or eternal law of Shaivagama presents an unfailing way which can form the basis for mankind to achieve the state of immortality. It is this very river of spiritual thought that has been irrigating the fields of Kashmiri literature and culture.

It will be wrong to say that this part of the world remained safe from political moves and counter moves. It too has had its share of turmoils. Wars have been fought here between the gods and the demons. But this fact too has a basis that whichever system appeared here from time to time, it was invariably influenced and also animated by this fundamental note of the Gita: "*Samatwam yoga uchyate* "(Yoga means harmony). Be it Buddhist or Hun or Greek or Semitic civilization — all schools of thought have echoed this fundamental note. Had there been not constraint of space, I would have turned the pages of history to prove this fact. Suffice it to point out here that all these streams of thought changed their original course in Kashmir — to challenge this fact it requires courage. First there were the followers of Buddhism who switched over from Hinayana to Mahayana school and later followed the Shaivagama. The Huns became devotees of Shiva. Leading the followers of Islam, Sheikh Nur-ud-Din Nurani (Nund Rishi) sang in tune with Lalleshwari and endorsed the basic principles of Shaivagama. He even went to the extent of saying:

Tas Padmanporich Lalle
Yemi gale amrit pivo
Swa saany avtar lvale
Suy var mye dilam divo

[That Lalleshwari of Padmanpur (Pampur), who drank gulps of ambrosia, was an Avtara of ours. O God, grant a similar boon to me.]

Later this stream continued to flow uninterruptedly in Kashmiri literary tradition and Sufi poetry, so much so that every musical concert in Kashmir begins with Lalla *vaaks* (verses of Lalleshwari).

Not that terrible calamities did not befall Kashmir. Caravans came and went away, invaders laid the paradisal land to waste. Parochialists kept on harping on their own tune. But at such critical junctures the blessed sons of Kashmir tried their best to preserve the literary and cultural fabric of Kashmir whenever they saw that Kashmiri culture was in danger.

This was clearly evident in the 10th or 11th century when Sanskrit changed into Apabhramsha which in turn evolved into

Kashmiri. In this very period Persian became the court language after the beginning of Islamic rule. The Sharada script continued for some time, but soon the Nastliq script of Persian became dominant. In fact this was a period when there was a conflict between Kashmiri and the foreign language. As the state first favoured Sanskrit and then Persian, the Kashmiri language was adopted by the ordinary people. But praise goes to the Kashmiri people that they not only made their mother tongue the garland of their neck and nurtured it, but made it more glorious by reinforcing it with the qualities of brotherhood, secular spirit and humanism to such an extent that other languages began to follow it. One thing is certain — the Kashmiri language and literature did not allow the tree of optimism, with which this garden of the Rishis remained abuzz, to wither away. While Lalleshwari is accepted by all to be its poetess, the devotion and sincerity with which Nund Rishi served Kashmiri is indeed remarkable. Paying tributes to Nund Rishi, Nadim admires him in these words:

Kaashir zyav Kaashir hazahavas
Chani navuk dwashvuny bosh
Nata shrapuhan kartam sahravas
Ha reshi lagay bhavas posh

[Kashmiri language and Kashmiri civilization
Are both proud of your name
But for you both would have perished in wilderness
O Rishi, I offer my floral tributes to you]

Thus, whenever there was a stir in local literary activity, Kashmiri poetry gushed out from its source, whether it was Sahib Kaul or Habibullah Naushahri, Rupa Bhavani or Shah Qalandar—everyone sang the sweet tunes of humanism and love.

Not only that, when the melody queen of Kashmir, Habba Khatoon and love-sick Arnimal, gave expression to their feelings of love and romance, they did so avoiding the notorious lanes of fanaticism and following the highway paved with the ideas of equity and noble-mindedness — which has been the hallmark of Kashmiri civilization. Habba Khatoon has expressed her innermost anguish in these lines:

Vaarivyan suuty vara chhas no
Chara karu myon malinyo

[I cannot get on well with my in-laws / O my father's family, come to my rescue]

Arni too cried her heart out in a very human way:

Lasa kami havasay, mazas gom basbasay

[What is there for me to live, I am just withering away]

There is nothing in the poetry of these two poetesses which deviates from simple expression of emotion to become the cause of any conflict.

And when the age of Masnavis, Sufi poetry and Bhakti lyrics came, at that time too the same sweet murmur of optimism came to be heard from Mahmood Gami to Ahad Zargar, some times in the form of romantic verse and some times in the garb of Sufi mysticism. Humanism, in fact, has been the keynote of our tradition. In the same very age Parmanand, Krishna Razdan, Lakshman Bulbul and Prakash Ram Kurigami spread the light of pure Shaiva thought and revived the Trika philosohy, while Shams Faqir, Wahab Khar, Shah Qalandar, Samad Mir, Nyama Sahib and Rehman Dar presented the non-dualism of "Shash Kalu", "Shash Rang", "Suhamsu" and "Ekoham bahusyami" in the form of "unity in diversity", drenching the Kashmiri mind with that wonderful wine the intoxication of which saves one from sinking into the quagmire of parochialism and hostility.

As times changed, during the last years of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the thin stream of our literature certainly turned from the gushing waters of the western stream and the Indian mainstream towards a particular direction, but happily for us, this turn did not go against the mainstream of Kashmiri culture in the hands of poet Mahjoor, Master Zinda Kaul and other writers, but became a part of river Vitasta's flow which has irrigated this land from the earliest times. Mahjoor exclaimed spontaneously:

Mahjoor des sonuy, bagah chhu nundbonuy
Ath lol gotsh baronuy, gulshan watan chhu sonuy

[Mahjoor, this country of ours is a beautiful garden
We must give it all our love
Our country is a lovely garden]

And Azad went a step or two further to say :

Jannatich dwada kwal zaanith tu maanith
Vonda myon chhu na mashravan
Vethi, Vernagas, Sendi, Rambiaras
Gangayi tu Jamnaye!

[I know that rivers of milk flow in heaven, but my mind cannot forget Vitasta, Verinag, Sindh, Rambiara, Ganga and Yamuna]

Unfortunately, the country's partition had a fallout like that of a wild fire all around Kashmir. Its flames reached this paradisal land also. But history is witness to the fact that these flames did not have any harmful effect on the roots of Kashmiri culture. We are not talking here of political somersaults — and there is no controversy about this. Everone knows that the form in which Kashmiri literature emerged in the post-1947 era after taking a complete turn did not have any place for partiality or parochial outlook. Fortunately, even in this era the leadership went to that blessed son of Kashmir who sang in tune with Lal Ded and said:

Mye chham ash paguhuch pagah sholi duniyah

[My hope is for tomorrow, for tomorrow the world shall be bright]

In his poetic works the epoch-making poet Nadim sang not only of the original glory of Kashmir, but gathering the light of East and West, he gave birth to a sunrise whose rays could help us all to come out of darkness.

At present too, all of us are terrified by the harsh blows of time, fearing lest our very existence should be threatened. Even so, the poetic voices that are emerging or the works of sculptors of ideas that are being created do not suggest that there is any need to abandon hope. Says Nadim:

Yi chhu son watan nundbon watan
Lachhi vuhur chhu lachhi phiri zamut nov
Path gomut beyi bronh amut nov
Navi ayi pakan gatshi pron watan
Yi chhu son watan nundbon watan

[This is our homeland, our beautiful homeland. Our million year old ancient homeland. Our homeland has been born anew a million times. It has lagged behind and then again forged head. It is like real gold tested on the touchstone of time. Our old homeland shall march forward with new gusto.]

I too, whenever I have murmured, I have found my forefathers' faith intermingling with my emotions and making me spontaneously to exclaim:

Watan chhu suuty satu-satu gam chhu kyah
Tsu chhukh nu kun, bu chhus nu kun, chhi wariyah
Himalu balu pyathu chhi asy nabas pilan
Sodur chhu saany man chhalan tu tan chhalan
Chhu rav khasan tu yethy zamini buth wucchan
Yeti chhi zuna gash volsanas yivan
Karoru bady sitaru saany rahnuma
Tsu chhuk nu kun, bu chhus nu kun, chhi wariyah
Kashir taj-e-Hind jannatuk nishan
Yi mohbatuk chaman yi lolu gulistan
Hameshu rozi shan-e-Hind dar jahan
Pakan rozi ta abad yi karvan
Aman chhu son ibtida tu intiha
Tsu chhuk nu kun, bu chhus nu kun, chhi wariyah

[There is nothing to worry, the country is always with us. You are not alone, nor am I. We are many. Through the Himalayas we can reach the sky. The sea washes our mind and body. When the sun rises it first sees the face of this land of ours. Even moonlight plays here with gay abandon. Millions of stars are there to guide us. Kashmir is the crown of India, the symbol of paradise. It is a garden of love and affection. The glory of India shall remain in the world forever. Our caravan shall keep on moving till the end of time. Peace is our be-all and end-all. We are not alone, we have numerous companions.]

This note of optimism finds its echo in Western thinking too. Dr. David Frawley is an eminent Vedic scholar of America. He has written more than twenty research books on the Vedas and Hinduism. Recently, he had come on a visit to India. He said many things that not only endorse this statement of mine but also point to its future. He says:

> "India should be more aggresive in asserting its identity on the international political scene if it is to gain the respect of the US and the Western world."

Foreseeing the emergence of India as a major world power in the 21 st century. Dr. Frawley adds: "The country needs a better diplomatic representation and media presence on the global platform besides resorting to an aggressive propagation of its cultural tradition.

... India has the potential to become the spiritual 'guru' of the world community in the fast changing times and it must gear up to take on that role.

Despite the tremendous technological advancement and mutual prosperity achieved by the Western world, it is faced with a grand vacuum of spirituality today and in this direction India must take a lead...

Before that India has to take a fresh look at its 5000 year old cultural tradition and rediscover its importance. The country also needs a major change in the outlook of the intelligentsia, which was inclined towards the West. India needs a new intelligentsia which reflects its tradition."

Dr. Frawley observes that it is strange that the Indian media itself adopted a strongly anti-India stance in comparison to the Western press. (*The Hindustan Times*, 21.02.2000)

This quotation is clear enough and there is no need to comment on it; and this is a suitable conclusion to my statement.

CHAPTER 10

Wisdom of Kashmir — The Assimilator of Knowledge Channels

Advaitavadini Kaul & Utpal Kaul

The celebrated land of Kashmir, situated as a diamond in the crown of the Himalayas, excels the beauty par excellence. Its beautiful greenery, hills, meadows, lakes, gardens, small streams alongwith other components of nature work as ornaments to add to its wealth of beauty. Nature has also bestowed sufficient physical grace to its inhabitants and with that they are also blessed with the high intellect to evaluate the beauty through various channels of the knowledge system.

Rich Contributions of Kashmiri Scholars

Thus from very ancient times we find varied contributions made by Kashmiri scholars in the field of religion, philosophy, poetry, poetics, literature, prosody, grammar, erotics, drama, music and the other arts like architecture, sculpture, painting, theatre and so on. They have delved deep into the science of knowledge and thus we find their active participation in the fields of Ayurveda, astrology, astronomy as well. So much so that it is believed that Caraka, who compiled the treatise on Ayurveda called the Caraka-Samhita, also belonged to Kashmir. To say in a nutshell, there is hardly any field in Indian scholarship where Kashmiri scholars have not left their significant mark. Although due to historical developments much evidence is not available to provide the first-hand description of these scholars and many of their original works do not even exist today, even then the subject involves a good

deal of time and energy to discuss the details, due to the diversity of disciplines to which Kashmiri scholars have made their significant contributions. In this paper an attempt has been made to emphasise the points which are little known to common masses.

It is impossible to think of Indian poetics excluding Kashmir. It won't be an exaggeration to say that the Indian poetics owes its origin, development and final establishment to Kashmir. In the galaxy of Kashmirian poets, we may place Bhamaha, Vamana, Anandavardana, Kuntaka, Mahimabhata and Ksemendra (Vyasadasa) at the first stage. They established the theories of *alankara, riti, dwani, vakrokti* and *aucitya*, respectively. Next, we have Abhinavagupta, Udbata, Lollaka, Sankuka, Bhattatauta, Rajanaka Tilaka, Pratiharendu, Rajanaka Ananda, Ratnakanth, and Jayarata who commented upon the already established theories on the poetics. Acharya Mammata is considered as the final authority on Indian poetics who examined and assimilated all the earlier theories while establishing his own theory. Other noteworthy names in the line are Rudrata, Ruyyaka and Shobakaramitra.

Amongst the great poets of ancient Kashmir, the famous ones are Shivaswami, Mankha, Bilhana, Jayanaka, Bhattabhima and Ratnakara. Other poets of note are Ksemendra, and Damodaragupta. Kshemendra was a prolific writer and had a wide range of interests. *Bharatamanjari* and *Ramayanamanjri* are his narrated version of the Mahabharata and the Ramanaya, respectively. Next comes his collection of stories known as *Brhat-katha-manjari* which represents the lost north-western version of the *Brhat-katha* attributed to Gunadhya, who had written it in the Paisaci Prakrit. Another Kashmiri scholar, Somadeva, also prepared a version of *Brhat Katha* which is known as *Katha-Sarit Sagara*.

Kashmir also nurtured Indian music alongwith other forms of art. Abhinavagupta's commentary on the *Natya-sastra* is so important that the study of *Natya-sastra* without *Abinaiva Bharati* is also considered an incomplete study of this *sastra* on Indian arts. *Sangita-Ratnakara* is one of the basic works on Indian music. It is written by Sarangadeva whose origin is from Kashmir. Even till the time of King Zain-ul-Abidin, we find the prevalence of Indian music in Kashmir. We find Srivara, who was himself a great

musicologist, once singing the verses from *Gitagovinda* before the king, who was very much pleased with his singing. Srivara refers to the existence of other great musicologists in Kashmir who used to sing from innermost urge. He also refers to female dancers projecting harmonious emotional sentiments through musical key-notes. He makes reference to open air theatre in vogue during his period and also the instrumental music that was popular then.

Saivism and Kashmir have become synonymous for it is not possible to think of the one without the other. In this line we have great scholars like Vasugupta, Kallata, Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta, Ksemaraja, and Somananda who made great contributions by composing considerable number of works which have been divided into *Agama, spanda* and *pratyabhjna sastras.*

At this point it is very important to note that it was not only the Saiva faith that continued to prevail in Kashmir throughout, but Kashmir was also a stronghold of Vaisnava faith. This is already proved by the existence of Vaisnava temples during the 8th century A.D. in Lalitaditya's time. There are also evidences that make one to believe that one amongst the three basic Vaisnava *agamas* known as Jayakhya-Samhita was composed in Kashmir. It refer to the use of birch-bark for writing purposes and for drawing *mandalas* on it. This *samhita* also refers to particular situations that make one to believe that it was compiled in Kashmir.

It is further believed that the *Baudayana-vrtti* — the authentic exposition of the Brahma Sutras was available only in Kashmir during the time when Ramanujacharya (10th-11th Century A.D.) who wrote his *Bhasya* on the Brahma sutras in Kanchi in the South, required to consult it. He had to travel to Saradadesa where he was provided a copy of the *vrtti* and after consulting it, he had a discussion with the Kashmiri scholars on his work. Then he wrote an introduction to his work while staying in Kashmir. His work was approved by the board of scholars in Kashmir and they also approved to name it as *Shribhasya*.

Stronghold of Buddhist Faith

Alongwith the Vaisnava and the Saiva faiths, Kashmir also was once a stronghold of the Buddhist faith. Actually it was through the expositions of the Kashmiri scholars that this faith

was revived from decay. Thus came into vogue the Sanskrit Buddhism and the school of Sarvastivada. It was for the first time that Buddhist scriptures were written in Sanskrit in Kashmir. Before that Buddhist writing used to be undertaken in Pali or Prakrit. The purpose of the fourth Buddhist Council, which is believed to have taken place in Kashmir, was to rearrange the Tripitaka according to various schools. Thus the outcome of this Council was the compilation of *Upadesa-Sastra* — the exposition of *Sutta Pitaka* and the *Vibhasa-Sastras* that explained the *Vinaga* and the *Abhidharma Pitrka*. By this Kashmiri scholars came to be known as Vaibhasikas. But these *sastras* are lost today. It is also believed that Kashmiri scholars compiled a treatise known as *Jnanaprasthana-sastra* — the *sarvastivadin Abhidarma*. We get these clues from the accounts left by scholars or travellers from China, Central Asia and Tibet. Therefore, the information is based on these sources which makes the study more interesting. We come to know about a host of Kashmiri Buddhist scholars who preached and propagated the Buddhist learning in the valley attracting a large number of adherents and also disseminated and expounded it in the neighbouring countries of Central Asia, China and Tibet.

It is said that Dharamtrata was a great Vaibhasika of Kashmir who lived during the 2nd century A.D. In the genealogy of Dhyana Masters of Kashmir, Dharmatrata figures prominently as founder of a particular school which was introduced in China by Buddhabhadra.

Harivarman was another famous Sarvastivadi teacher of Kashmir during the same time. Feeling sorry for wrong interpretations of the teachings of the Buddha, he made an attempt to go through the texts of all the schools and after assimilating the real teachings, he composed the *Satyasiddhi Sastra* which became a source of inspiration and right knowledge.

Skadhila was the teacher of Sanghabhadra — the teacher of Vimlamitra during the 5th century A.D. They were the *sarvastivadins*, who taught in the monasteries of Kashmir. They also wrote treatises which are available in Chinese translations. Bodhila was another Kashmiri Buddhist scholar who lived in a monastery that was situated adjoining the south of the Sankaracharya hill. It was a Mahasanghika Monastery and Bodhila

composed here *Tattva-sangraha* in Sanskrit. Yasa was the Kashmiri scholar who provided all facilities and assistance to the Chinese traveller Yuan Chuang who was a state guest, in the study and translation of the Buddhist texts. It is reported that he was a Hinayanist.

By the 8th century A.D., Buddhist logic had taken over. Dharmottaracharya was the scholar of Kashmir who wrote commentaries on two treatises of Dharmakirti — the great Buddhist logician. He also composed other works. About the same period there was Ravigupta or Surya in Kashmir who emphasised that the doctrines of Nagarjuna and Asanga were the same *i.e.* the doctrines of Sunyata and Cittamatra are identical. Ravigupta was a *siddha*. He had attained the *siddhi* of Tara. He is reported to have built twelve centres of Buddhism in Kashmir and Magadha. There are about seven works compiled by Ravigupta preserved in Tibetan translation.

Sarvagnamitra, about whom Kalhana speaks in his *Rajatarangini* was perhaps a disciple of Ravigupta. He too was a devotee of Tara and wrote *Sragdarastotra* in praise of the goddess. There are three Tibetan translations of this *stotra*. There is also a commentary on it by Jinaraksita. The hymn, alongwith its commentary in Tibetan, was edited by S.C. Vidyabhaskara in 1908. There are other works also attributed to Sarvaynamitra and all area in praise of goddess Tara.

Sankarananda was a Kashmiri Brahmana who wrote commentaries on seven treatises of Dharmakirti which gave him great honour. Thus he received the title of *Paramopasaka mahapandita Sankarananda* and was considered as second Dharmakirti. Four of his works are preserved in Tibetan translation. Gangadhara was the great Buddhist tantric scholar during 11th century A.D. Kashmiri Ratnavajras and the well known Tibetan translator Rin-Chen-bzan-Po were his disciples.

Kashmiri Buddhist scholars, who travelled to China and Central Asia, learnt the languages of those lands and then translated Sanskrit treatises into those languages. Sanghabhuti, Gautama Sanghadeva, Punyatrata, Dharmayasas, Buddhayasas, Vimalaksa, Buddhajiva, Dharmamitra, Gunavarman,

Buddhavarnman, Ratnacinta and Pragnabala are some prominent names of such scholars. Sanghadhuti was perhaps the first Kashmiri scholar to reach China about 381 A.D. Punyatrata got a chance to work with the renowned Kamarajiva in China. Buddhayasas also came in contact with this great scholar. Vimalaksa was the great Vinaya-master who taught in a famous monastery known as miracle monastery in Kucha (Central Asia). Kumarajiva is reported to have studied Vinaya text under him there. Buddhagiva had reached Southern China through sea route. He translated some important manuscripts which Fa-hien had brought from India. Dharamamitra was the Kashmiri monk who travelled in various parts of the Central Asia. He was not allowed to proceed to China. He somehow reached Dun-Huang in 424 A.D. and founded a monastery there and planted more than a thousand trees. Then he returned to South China. Here he met the great Gunavarmana who had come from Kashmir. Dharmamitra's specialisation was Dhyana so he introduced a number of works on Dhyana in China. He translated about twelve works into Chinese.

Gunavarman belonged to a royal family of Kashmir. From his very childhood, he was very compassionate. At the age of 12 he became a monk and mastered all Buddhist scriptures and thus came to be known as the master of the *Tripitaba*. At the age of thirty, he was invited to ascend the throne but he declined the offer and left the Kingdom of Kashmir for Ceylon. After propagating the Dharma there, he reached Java. It is said that Gunavarman converted the whole island to Buddhism. Then he was invited by the king of China and enjoyed the royal hospitality there. He preached *Saddarma-pundarika* and the *Desabhumi Sutra* there. He completed many translation works there. Organising the Sangha of the Chinese nuns was one of his remarkable activities.

Kashmiri Scholars in Tibet

Likewise, we find a considerable number of Kashmiri scholars who worked in Tibet. Dharmakaradatta was the contemporary of the Tibetan King Khri-Sron-Ide-btsar (755-797 A.D.). He translated Vinayavastu alongwith another Kashmiri scholar, named Sarvagnadeva, and other two scholars from India and Tibet, respectively. Ananta, Jinamitra, Danasia, Sraddakaravarman, were other Kashmiri scholars who translated

a number of texts into Tibetan independently and in collaboration with other Buddhist scholars.

Ratnavaja was originally a Brahmana of Kashmir who became a great Buddhist master. After studying in Kashmir under Gangdhara, he proceeded to Vikramasila for further studies. There he received the title of Pandita from the king. Then he returned to Kashmir. From here he proceeded to Udyana (Urgyana) and then went to Tho-lin and collaborated with Rin-Chen-bzan-po in translation work. Then he visited Central Tibet, where he was appointed as supervisor for the rebuilding of the circular terrace of the Bsam-yas monastery which was burnt in 986 A.D. He supervised five hundred workers which included brick-layers, carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths and sculptors for three years. He also composed texts on Buddhist logic.

Jnanasribhadra went uninvited to Tibet. He had a pupil from Zanskar who assisted him. He spread Buddhist logic and the Abhisanaya in Tibet. He also worked as translator - interpretor there. He earned proficiency in Tibetan within three years and a good number of Tibetans studied under him. He also authored several important works and worked together with Rin-Chen-bzan-po in translating important works.

We learn about a great Kashmiri nun, named Laksmi. She taught *Anutra tantra* in Tibet during 1007 or 1010 A.D. She preached the ritual of propitiating *Arya Avalokiteswara* by performing the rite of fasting. She has authored some works as well. Some of these works are preserved in Tibetan translation.

Likewise, there are descriptions of great Kashmiri scholars named Subutisrisanti, Somanatha, Mahajana, Parahitabhadra, Bhavayaraja, Kumarasri, Kanakvarman, Jayananda, Kumaraprajna, Gunakarasribhadra, Sugatasri, Sakyasribhadra, Sarvajnasriraksita, Dharmadhara and Sumansri who continued to work in Tibet till about 14th Century A.D.

Sakyasribhadra was the last Kashmiri scholar in Tibet who acquired great fame in Buddhist learning. He was born in 1127 A.D. Before going to Tibet in 1200 A.D., he had visited Vikramsila, Bengal and Nepal. He worked intensively with Tibetan scholars.

In Tibet he was simply known as the Pandit from Kashmir. He had many noteworthy students. In the monastery of Sa-Skya, he functioned as the superior of the monastery. Nostalgia for his native province brought him back to Kashmir where he died in 1225 A.D. at the age of 98 years.

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CHAPTER 11

Rupa Bhawani — A Kashmiri Poet

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I have grown up with their words resonating in my ears and becoming a part of my consciousness. In the beginning they were just musical sounds, tuneful, some of them solemn, some of them catchy in their rhythms. They were sung all around, all the time. At wedding festivities, the male singer would always begin his first number with a grave, reverent invocation, invariably a verse of Lal Ded. The chant would be taken up by a chorus of his party of vocalists and instrumentalists, to be echoed by the musical or unmusical voices of all those present. Almost everyone knew the words, I too, but to me they had no meaning, it was just music. It was only much later, not only after I had grown up, but after I actually began to understand the real meaning of my own mother-tongue, that I came to grasp what lay behind the sounds. To others too the meaning was no longer familiar, having got clouded over centuries of disuse. The body was all there, only the spirit seemed to be absent. And that set me off on a quest – to meet these four women, Lal Ded, Habba Khatun, Rupa Bhawani and Arnimal, who lived in Kashmir in the fourteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, respectively, and left for us volumes of their poetic work in the form of songs, ceremonial chants and hymns.

Once I had made their acquaintance, I realized that clubbing them together was a huge mistake. They were powerful, individual

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voices, their talent uniquely each one's own, the territories and followings distinct. There was no scope for neat labels here. One had to listen to each one of them separately and thus come to terms with the real import of their words. Just as in life they had demanded and found a place and separate space to be themselves, they seemed to demand the same for their poetic work. But something that I had learnt as a student of English literature came in handy – I could, at least broadly categorise their work as falling into two streams : the Mystic and the Romantic. It seemed that chronologically, the two streams came into full play alternately – the mystic voice of Lalded followed by the romantic one of Habba Khatun, which in turn was displaced by a mystic outburst in Rupa Bhawani, and then it was back to Romanticism in Arnimal. This was, of course, an attempt to find a convenient peg to hang something which was otherwise too big to handle. But it helped in giving a perspective to work from, and also to give a focus to the study. Besides, finding parallels to their content and form in other mystic and romantic literatures, helped not only in understanding the relative merits, but also in assigning them a place in the world of literature produced by women.

This paper attempts an appraisal of the poetic work of one of them – Rupa Bhawani. Rupa Bhawani, also known as Alkheshwari, or simply Saheb, was born in 1625 in the family of Madhava Dhar at Safakadal, Srinagar. From her very childhood to the end of her long life – she died in 1721 – she is said to have shown an inclination for the other worldly. Though married at the age of seven, which was the prevalent practice in the cultural pattern she belonged to, she renounced the householder's way of life, and left home. Wandering from one secluded place to another, she practised great penance, and went into long periods of meditation, like Buddha, in search of spiritual awakening and salvation. Having at last found, through profound yogic *sadhana* and an inward-looking eye, the secret of equipoise, she communicated her experience of a cosmic consciousness to her devoted band of devotees and followers, in poetic utterances. These were carefully recorded and thus are preserved for posterity.

This paper is going to skirt the issue of the miracles she is supposed to have performed right from the age of three, believing her to be an incarnation of the goddess Bhawani as her followers do. The focus will be on her poetry, its content and form.

Her main work is the *Rahasyopadesh*, a collection of one hundred and forty six stanzas in the form of *vakhs*, a purely Kashmiri verse form in which the mystical and didactic poetry of Lal Ded was written in the fourteenth century. It consists of four lines, each a trochaic tetrametre, and does not adhere to a strict rhyme scheme. In fact more often than not, there is no rhyme, but a solemn rhythm, a certain dignity of movement, which suits the generally grave tone of religious poetry. Of course such poetry is ecstatic too, and we find Rupa Bhawani often varying rhythms to suit the mystic outbursts of an ecstatic state of mind.

The main facts of her life are well-known, thanks to a father's vision and belief in his daughter's spiritual destiny and legacy, which led him to have all the events connected with her life and work properly documented. It is remarkable that a father, who had followed custom in performing a "child marriage", should welcome his daughter back into his home after she calmly announces that it is not possible for her to continue to live with her husband and his family because they show no sensitivity to her "differentness". In the beginning of the seventeenth century, here is a woman who asks for and, what is more, gets "a room of her own". Not only does she refuse to follow a woman's common fate at that time, that of quiet submission to the norms set down by society, but dares to break free and chart a course of her own. No doubt her father's courage in supporting her decision and making it possible for her to pursue an alternative way of life had a lot to do with his own spiritual orientation and the certainty of his belief in her divinity. He was the first to acknowledge her Sainthood and established the practice of her being venerated as a saint. A temple and shrines were built in the places she spent time in. Even western-educated members of the Kashmiri Pandit Dhar clan she belonged to, make an offering of sugar-candy at her shrine twice a year, and keep a fast on her death-anniversary. Whichever family a Dhar girl goes into after her marriage, also carries on with the practice. The result is that today most Kashmiri Pandit families have come under Rupa Bhawani's sphere of influence, believing that she was a saint endowed with great spiritual power. It is said that in the beginning, the other members of her father's family would ridicule him, and deliberately cook a stew of sheep's hooves in the kitchen, so that the strong, coarse smell and flavour of the non-vegetarian dish, which took a long

time to cook, would permeate the air of meditation and *puja* in the house. But Madhava Dhar and his daughter refused to be provoked by such needling and Rupa Bhawani's patience became as legendary as Lal Ded's. The father's supportive role, of course, made it easier for the former. No wonder she begins the main part of *Rahasyopadesha*, with the acknowledgment that her father is among her first Gurus –

Om gwar antar tath nirmalam
Shuddham atyant vidyadharam
Lal- nam lal parma gwaram
Shiva Madhav naham parmam Brahma soham

(I begin with the sacred sound and symbol, "Om".
Having installed the pure and greatly learned
Guru in the form of Lalded and Madhava, in a heart and mind purified,
I realize that I am reduced to nothing in myself,
But become a Supreme Self, a part of Brahma Himself.)

Here is a metaphysical conceit in the manner of the English poet John Donne – one is nothing and everything at the same time, which might sound absurd at first sight, but a closer look reveals that is exactly what happens in a mystic experience of merger with the Superme Reality.

Veneration of the Guru is very important concern of hers. The Guru is necessary not only to initiate her into the world of knowledge, but his hand is needed to guide at every step of the arduous spiritual journey, to discipline an otherwise straying mind and keep it on the track of the mystical quest. It is interesting to note that while mystic or ecstatic song has been one of the forms used by women to protest against the strictures and conventions of patriarchy – Mirabai, the Christian mystic poet Christina Rossetti, Rabia the Sufi poet, are all instances – Rupa Bhawani acknowledges not only Lalded, but her father as her spiritual guide. Here she not only accepts, but even extols patriarchy. This is a comment upon two things mainly : one, that she encountered no hindrance from the father in pursuing her own ways, two, that the tightly-knit social structure of Kashmiri Pandits would not tolerate too loud a protest – certain norms had to be accepted and preserved; if the husband figure was to be given up, another male

had to become the protector. Perhaps this latter might have had something to do with the father, in return, doing all he could to support her when she did break some conventions.

A close look at the *vakhs* reveals that her main preoccupation is with primal philosophical questions : the purpose of Life and how to bring about a harmonious relationship among the constituents of an individual personality – body, mind, emotion and soul. She talks about how one can break free from the limitations of the body while working towards spiritual evolution and how a tranquility of mind, while engaged in the quest for the Eternal Truth, can be brought about. The detailed description of her own yogic practices and the experience of a rare ecstatic state brought about by an awakened *kundalini*, in which the burden of the material world seems to fall off and becoming pure spirit, the goal of merger with the Absolute Reality is achieved, are some of the main concerns of her work. The concept of *shunya* (the state of Nothingness or the idea of the great Void) is mentioned again and again in the spirit of the *sufi* who asks for nothing but the total annihilation of Self (the concept of *Fana*). The following verse, richly metaphorical, illustrates –

Gwarith sumarith shunya khadum
Parud morum tavay suti
Pantsa agna lal chadovum
Gwash prazulum tavai suti

(Deep search and thought achieved this state of
nothingness,
That is how I stilled the mercurial mind.
Five kinds of sacrificial fires were lit
That is what brought about Radiant Light.)

The motif of "radiant light", is a recurring one in all mystic poetry, whether in the East or the West. As the opposite of "darkness", it is the final dispellar of doubt and a revelation of Truth, which is said to be dazzling in nature. In Rupa Bhawani's work too we find a similar ardent wish to still the restless, doubting mind, rip up the veil of ignorance and see the "Light". She wants to shed the burden of the gross reality behind which the inner spirit is hidden, and thus find self-realization. The Void, therefore,

(The one who knows within oneself the Cause and the Grace,
Knows that Day and Night exist in the mind itself,
To one who knows the Multi-faceted One through meditation,
The meaning is clear. Mind itself knows the nature of the Self.)

The use of the word 'zath' in the last line demands attention for a number of reasons. Firstly, it can mean several things to a Kashmiri – caste, species, breed, race, family name, lineage, tribe or the true nature of something – depending on the context, and the many connotations of the word suggest a wealth of meaning to the reader. Besides, it also hints at the rigidly hierarchical structure of the Kashmiri Pandit society of the time, where every person has a certain 'place' in which he or she has to be located. She names her father even as she places herself in the lineage of Lalded and thus suggests her *'zath'* in so many senses of the word. It packs into itself so much that makes sense in the richest manner to a mind born and breed in the Kashmiri socio-cultural tradition. Ironically enough, ultimately it is the language of caste derived from the social pressure of the very Brahminism that Rupa Bhawani protests against in another *vaakh*, quoted later, which serves to communicate subversive thought. Though all mystics, whether from the Indian *Bhakti* or the Sufi school exhort the listener to rise above distinctions made by man, who at best has only limited knowledge, and cannot see the one spirit that resides in all, yet the language of man is indispensable for communication. This observation is further fortified by another verse quoted below where she uses the word *varaye*, which means 'to wed'. Marriage is a state she had walked out of in her own life, but still she could not be free of the power of existing vocabulary : it is the marital metaphor she must rely on to communicate her thought !

Var diyi ta buh veraye vasa
Bhumi pad game rasa rasa
Khasan ta shabad shunum ahang
Sarang rag veena ta chyang

(If He should grant a boon, I would wed myself to my essence,

My feet slowly treading the earth,
I would rise in a resonance of the eternal sound –
And the music of the *sarang*, the *veena* and the *chang*.)

Obviously, Rupa Bhawani must have been born in a culture steeped in religion, where Sanskrit, the language of the Hindu scriptures and Persian, the official language, were part of ordinary discourse. The ease with which words from both languages become a part of her poetic diction suggests the richness of her linguistic background. Born in a scholarly Brahmin family that had only a few generations back come to settle in Kashmir from South India, and considering its rich socio-religio-cultural background, it would seem that such a vocation and such scholarship would come easy, but it has to be noticed that she alone of her brothers and sisters received a spark that set her on a mystical journey uniquely her own. In fact a brother of hers is supposed to have been illiterate, even though as a son he must certainly have received his father's attentions as a teacher! The above *vaakh* is a good example of her linguistic virtuosity, where she shifts with ease from the Sanskritised Kashmiri to the Persianised. *Bhumi* (the earth) and *game* (walking) are pure Sanskrit, while *ahang* and *chang* are Persian words. This verse also indicates the richness of the culture where there is a familiarity with a wide variety of musical instruments - the *sarang* of Kashmir, the *veena* of South India and the *chang* of Central Asia and the Middle East. The alliteration, the repetitive sibilants and the assonance point to a high skill in musicality. Though the thought here is not simple, it is fine poetry, which makes it accessible to a finely tuned temperament. The *vakh* is an example of perfect fusion of thought and form, feeling and its expression, sound and meaning. The journey of the spirit, ascending through various levels of being to reach the final one of awareness of the Supreme, in fact reveals the divinity lying within one's own self. It is this truth that the *vakh* so felicitously, so harmoniously reveals.

Rupa Bhawani's Philosophy

Rupa Bhawani's philosophy seems to lay stress not only on the concept of non-duality in the field of the spiritual, but even among human beings she advocates the radical concept of striving to rise above all external or man-made distinctions. That a mystic, devoted to the idea of finding salvation through individual effort

and merit, should think of showing a way to the lesser privileged, is astonishing. That is what makes her not only a yogi, but a socially concerned human being, who is responsible for the removal of many social evils from Kashmiri Pandit society. She rejected ritual and mere form in religion.

Nav tara vav savara
Na rang na varn ta na guthur
Bronh an nyenday pata kar varay
Kohanday dari ta kas dare.

(Ferry the river with the wind as ferryman,
Colourless, casteless, clanless.
Weed your field and then do the rest,
Who then the debtor and who creditor?)

Metaphors from farming and river transport, common sights in Kashmir, are used to explain the absurdity of set notions of superiority or otherwise of birth. When the Divine, who ferries us across the turbulent ocean of this world, has no colour, form or *gotra* (clan name), who are we to impose such distinctions on mere humans? One must remind oneself that these are words spoken in seventeenth century Kashmir, by a woman, who must have had unbounded courage and a rare strength of conviction to make such a radical statement against discrimination.

Yus mani heye dhyan ta panas tole
Kunh na geli ta kunsi na gele
Zagi Haras ta lagyas bele
Panay panas suti mele

(The one who meditates and consciously weighs oneself,
Judges none and is judged not,
Only waits for Him and His benediction,
Such a one will fuse with the Eternal One.)

Here is an earnest desire to surrender everything and achieve a state of supreme detachment, where nothing matters except one's own estimation of oneself. Accountability is only to the "Eternal One". There is no "other" here, just the spirit of the seeker and the sought. That an important sermon is delivered in such a condensed form, points to the high degree of poetic skill.

While describing the ecstasy of a mystic experience, Rupa Bhawani comes very close to the "fine madness" of the sufi dervish, using the metaphor of the *saqi* and her cups of intoxicating wine –

Deeh anand nada may
Lotsan piala mutsur
Saqay pilao hu-hu-ha
Bu baha ha-ha matwala

(The body in bliss, a river of wine!
The cups of these eyes are open.
O Saqi, come and fill them to the brim, do!
Hoo Hoo Ha! I cry in ecstasy, a madness in my heart!)

This is another pointer to the liberal education she must have received, which apparently included lessons from Persian poetry. Hence her familiarity with Omar Khayyam (?-1123) and Hafiz (1320-1389), who use the metaphor from the tavern so liberally in their mystic poetry. She is now placed in a constant state of bliss attained after rigorous mystic practices. It is also the state to which Sufis aspire, hence the terminology and metaphor is theirs. There is an echo of Lalded's brooding on breath-control in yogic meditation. Inhalation makes a kind of sucking in sound represented by *hoo*, while exhalation is a loud *ha*. How many debts to how many traditions are paid in one felicitous verse!

She uses similes from not only the Hindu mythology, but from normal day to day activities in order to convey thoughts and observations about the Transcendental. One finds a very well-worked out device of the Epic simile, using the process of making ghee (an essential commodity while performing a *yagya*), in the following two *vakhs* –

Mandh samudar don sani
Chhavak samadh nad-bindu tsath
Dan akhand milïyo makhan
Sadikaris drayom gev -

Tav roop yagya hoomas karith -
Ahut ditsas angan hunz
Jyot parzäne karan chyane
Mane atur ta nanyas bwöy

(Churn the milk of the mind, your Self the churner,
Locate the Primal Point and Sound. Break it down with the power of meditation.
Heat the butter of knowledge,
Spiritually empowered, you will find the ghee.

With these ingredients, a *yagya* I perform,
Offering the oblation of my own limbs.
The flames that rise are Your own effulgence.
In them my essence revealed, I stand as myself, finally.)

There is a deep concern for realization of one's true identity, to find the centre of one's being and then to rise above it, but the heaviness of the mystical concern is lightened by the use of a purely domestic metaphor. The images connected with the process of churning also have other connotations to the Hindu, associated as they are with the churning of *Kshirsagar,* and the childhood of Lord Krishna. All this adds more layers of meaning to the two *vakhs*.

For the mystic poet the problem is to communicate something she alone has experienced. It is something which has at best only a self-referentiality. To most readers it is impenetrable, lying as it does outside their 'normal' experience. To make it comprehensible, the only tools available are those of ordinary vocabulary from which a word or phrase has to be found to explain the 'unexplainable', – not an easy task by any means. Had she been merely a mystic and not a poet, she might have been quite content with the experience itself and happy to stay in that blissful state of silence, but being a poet she must speak, though vocabulary can only be rhetorical approximation of a state of mind. For example there is the phrase, *antarmukhi drishti,* which occurs as a refrain at the end of a large number of her verses. It is Sanskrit, the meaning being 'a sight that faces inwards.' The act of *sadhana,* to realize Truth, is supposed to begin with meditation, in which, the eyes are closed to all that can be seen with the eyes. So what does one see? The images of the physical world that rise to the mind? No, all perceptions connected to objective reality have to be suspended and in their place is contemplation of one's own self, by one's own self without any external aids. It is a self-communion where normal *drishti* (sight) has no role to play. What one may see, if one is a mystic of some stature, would be something that truly lies within oneself, inside one's own self. That is the only way in

which seeing something that cannot be seen makes sense. Being a poet, Rupa Bhawani does not use the cliche 'the eyes of the soul', she uses instead this much more graphic, forceful phrase for such perception.

There is a brooding intellectuality that characterizes Rupa Bhawani's poetry. Unlike most mystic poets who suggest an intuitive comprehension of the Unknown, she can only merge herself with it after she has analyzed the whole process of the exercise, going over all the steps one by one, pondering over what has been achieved and what remains. That is why her poetry needs an intellectual response as much as an emotional one. There is a sophistication of thought, a simultaneously inward, outward, even upward looking eye, with which our eyes and mind have to be synchronized in order to understand the full import of her poetry. But with a little effort, an appreciation of her poetry is possible even to the uninitiated mind. It is necessary to draw her out of the confines of sainthood in order to realize that she was not only a mystic, but a talented poet, an extraordinary woman of courage, whose real place in the history of Kashmiri literature and thought, needs to be better researched and determined.

CHAPTER 12

Folklore of Jammu and Kashmir

*Prof. Somnath Dhar**

Geographically, Jammu and Kashmir State falls into three distinct regions : the Kashmir Valley, Jammu and the hilly region of Ladakh. Each region has its own pattern of folklore, distinct from the others. It gets interpreted in folk-tales and folk-songs, dance and dance drama, fairs, festivals and customs, superstitions, proverbs, riddles, myths as well as folk arts. Literally, folklore is nourished by the masses, and in turn, nourishes them.

The Kashmir Valley

An unknown folk bard starts the vogue of folk-songs, compelling in tune, content and effect. Similar is the impact of other forms of folk expression, like the folk-tales, of which all the regions have an inexhaustible fund. Folk operas and ballads have spontaneity and mirth. They are generally intriguing and hilarious. Sown over the centuries, they have assumed immortality.

Folk-songs present considerable variety in theme, content and form. The love-lorn pour out their hearts in songs. The boatmen sing to the rhythm of paddling boats. Songs are sung to herald the bounties of nature. The village holymen sing semi-mystic songs. Grandmothers sing lullabies and cradle songs to put grand children to bed thus:

I rock thee, my ear-ring, I rock thee,
Thou are the God of Love at evening,

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And, the Sun at early morning,
I rock thee, my ear-ring, I rock thee!

Wedding songs are full of mirth, even boisterous sometimes. *Vanvun*, the wedding songs, sung by women, provide a difference in diction among different communities. The beauty of the bride is sung by the rustic muse in befitting terms:

Our belle is robed in muslin,
O maid, who has dressed you?
Your teeth are so many pearls,
Who has delivered them from the sea,
O lovely maid!

Women appeal to the gods to bless their newly-weds. The plea, by all communities, is to the bridegroom to cherish their deloved daughter.

Folk-songs are related to certain occupations. The village folk sing lilting songs while planting paddy saplings. The weavers and embroiderers sing songs with unusual gusto while their deft and nimble fingers work on *Pashmina* shawls. The rural women hum songs while spinning yarn, thus:

On my mat, in my home, is perched my spinning wheel,
I wheel it and weave threads out of it.

The Pampore fields grow an unusual flower, the Saffron, so well-known in song and legend. While picturing the beauty and fragrance of the saffron flower, peasants go ecstatic:

Towards Pampore went away my darling,
Saffron flowers caught him in fragrant entrance,
He is there, and ah me! I am here,
When? Where? Allah! Would I see his face!

There is also a rich variety of pastoral songs – simple and chaste. These acquire a singular charm when sung in chorus by villagers, during the sapling season – when nature is replete with fresh beauty – and, harvesting season, when their surroundings are bountiful. These songs are fresh and lucid and outstandingly rich in rhythm and vitality. These are rich in diction, content and tone that differentiates them from the urban product. Each form is suited to its theme.

Romantic ballads, originally sung by the peasantry, and passed on by word of mouth, continue to have universal appeal among the masses. A typical one runs thus:

Maddened by bewitching Shirin,
Khusroo went to batter the mountain,
To whom did this world prove faithful?
Alas! who killed you, you lost one?

The legendary lovers, Himal and Nagraya, are recalled in wedding songs thus:

Nagraya will take his seat on the golden carpet,
And take away Himal in the jewelled palanquin.

The predominant theme of folk-songs is varied moods of love. A woman's touching complaint about her strayed lover, who has deserted her, goes thus.

You must tell me,
Where my boy has gone?
Is he a fountain in life's garden?
Or, a well of nectar, sweet and delicious?

Rauf dance-and-song is delightful to watch and hear. It is danced by tender-footed maidens in rhythmic movement and inter-linked arms.

Kashmir has an inexhaustible fund of folk-tales. Himal and Nagaraya, Zohra Khatun and Haya Band are distinctly Kashmiri in origin. The prose of folk-tales is picturesque and colloquial. An old peasant narrates folk tales, often interspersed with fragments of narrative poetry, making the tale effective and spell-binding.

Delightful replicas of Shabrang - Prince-thief of Kashmir – are to be found in Norse, Dravidian and Chinese tales. Hilarious stories of thieves, like Laiq Tsur and his famous 'pupil' Mahadev Bishta – the Robin Hood of Kashmir – are current in villages and urban homes of Kashmir.

The festivals heralding four clear-cut seasons in the valley of Kashmir are occasions for merry-making, outings and

enjoyment. And, those festivals connected with different faiths have devotional and ritual content.

Each community in Kashmir has individual superstitions, based on their conscious and unconscious minds. Superstitions in the Hindu community have Tantric influences. Their implementation in daily life becomes almost an obsession. These have effect on their customs, and festivities, births, deaths, marriages, professional plans, travel plans, etc. It is a good omen to see an inkpot, a book, paddy, bread, milk, yoghurt, coin - first thing in the morning. But seeing a cat, a donkey, oil-container, a broom, a comb, doesn't augur well. Horoscopes of the boy and the girl have to be matched before marriage talk even begins.

The Muslims tie Taviz (amulets) sanctified by religious men, around their children's arms, wrists, neck and head, as a protection against bad luck or to nullify the effect of an 'evil eye'.

While the older people indoctrinate children to obey these superstitions, the young question them as irrational impositions. Nevertheless, folk beliefs don't die that easily, for, they are ingrained in the social system one is born and nurtured into.

Dogri Folklore

Folklore – as in the rest of India – is the "myths of the race". The natural intermingles with the supernatural. The folklore of Dogra Desh – Jammu and the surrounding areas – consists of folk-tales, folk-songs, ballads, proverbs and riddles. This provides the means of creative self-expression, myths, customs, etc.

Many of the Dogri folk-tales have a didactic bias. These have fulfilled the role of living traditions for the people for hundreds of years. Pride and prejudice, heroism, victory and defeat features dramatically in their tales. The lore connected with heroes like General Zorawar Singh – the conqueror of Ladakh, and described by the historians as one of the greatest generals of the 19th century – and his associate Wazir Ratno – are lionized in folklore. Basti Ram, Mian Dado and many others are their adorable heroes, for they sacrificed their all to save the honour of their families and the country. Ballads called 'Bars' recount the thrilling exploits of these heroes.

Romantic ballads, like 'Heer Norni' are compared to Punjab's celebrated counterparts, like Heer Ranja : many ballads and songs portray the conflict between love and duty in a telling manner. The songs of love are suffused with emotion – deep-felt and spontaneous – and in words full of sweetness and romance. As in soldiering, the Dogras have reached enviable heights in art and paintings. As such, their folk-songs are a creative expression of the simple and straightforward martial people.

The ballads are sung to the accompaniment of a small drum, with liveliness and vitality, to the enchanted masses.

The folk-songs represent Dogri life in all its aspects – musically and fully – than any other type of folk literature. Living as they do amidst rugged hills and barren slopes, their musical expression is rugged and rough, and yet it has an appeal of its own. The haunting notes of the flute enhance that rugged beauty of the song:

Lover's flute is playing,
The belle levaes her home,
On the pretext of fetching water!

An indifferent lover is questioned thus:

The happy world moves on and on,
But broken is my love at dawn,
How do the broken-hearted live under the sun,
O, my deceitful love?

Thou knowest where are sold delicious dates,
Love is blind and faces all fates,
See how in thy thrall I'm in a sad state,
O my deceitful love!

The village damsel pleads her father to search for a suitable groom for her, thus:

My dear father,
You are mature and wise,
Therefore look out for,
A good partner for me.

My dear father,
Listen to my request,
I want a spouse like Rama,
Help me in this quest.

Songs are sung at fairs and festivals, shrines of saints and martyrs, temples of gods and goddesses.

Dogri folk literature provides enviable entertainment. For centuries, it has sustained their creative expression. It does offer research possibilities for disciplines like history, philology and languages.

LADAKH

Ladakhi folklore presents an interesting and colourful spectrum. Theirs are tales of myths of the race, overflowing with mystique, tradition, love, trade and pastoral-related pursuits.

The folk-songs range from beautiful songs replete with melodies, alliterative turns of phrase and idiom to bawdy songs. They are simple in thought and diction. Their songs and dances, some going back to the pre-Buddhist era, have been well preserved by word of mouth and contain a number of archaic words. To this day, they continue with practically negligible transformation. The songs overflow with consonants and unmusical expressions.

Ladakhis are simple and modest folks, fun-loving and full of gay abandon. They pursue their unique culture with dogged determination and cling to their spiritual philosophy. *Tsas-Ton* (birth feast), *Ming-Ton* (naming feast) and *Bag-Ton* (marriage feast) are the occasions for week-long feasts, frolic and dances, when *Chhang* is consumed aplenty. *Shid-Tom* (funeral feast) is held according to the means of the family. Tradition and superstition guide everyday life of Ladakhis.

They sing *Dard* songs related to the origin of the earth; songs from the ancient epic of king Nyima-gon; they sing graphic hymns composed by Minister Ngorub Standzin, in honour of King Tsepal. There are saga-songs sung for legendary heroes like Kesar, who died for the land and was bemoaned by his wife, Bruguma. It runs:

Oh! my clever king,
When thou goest to the upper land of the gods,
And seest all the beauties among the fairies,
Then do not forget thy wife from the land of men.

Oh! my wise Lord,
When thou goest to the upper land of the gods,
And seest all the beauties among the fairies,
Then do not reject Bruguma from the land of men.

Oh! my wise Lord,
When thou goest to the lower land of the Mees,
And seest all the beauties among the ladies,
Then do not reject thy helpmate from the land of men.

The conqueror of Ladakh, General Zorawar Singh, who was the greatest soldier of Maharaja Gulab Singh, is the legendary figure in Ladakhi folklore. His wife laments his death on an expedition to Tibet, with poignancy and pathos:

I do not wish to eat bread received from the sinful northerners,
I do not wish to drink water received from the sinful northerners,
Amidst the inhabitants of this land I have no friends and relations,
In the northern plains I have no brothers and friends,
In the place of friends and relations I have only Zorawar,
And it was only Zorawar who made me a despised widow,
And it was only Zorawar who made his queen a despised widow,
When arriving at the Zoji pass, my fatherland can be seen,
When arriving at the Zoji pass, Lahore and Punjab can be seen,
Although I can see my fatherland, I shall not arrive there,
Although I can see my fatherland, Zorwar's queen will not arrive there.

A Ladakhi romantic song, sung by a shepherdess to her equally love-lorn shepherd, runs as follows :

Oh, but lean thy bosom towards it (flower girl)
It will nestle to thy soul
It will cling with tenderest tendrils round thine heart
Ah lad! lean thy bosom towards it,
It will grow into thy soul,
And, with strong, yet tender tendrils, hold thine heart!

The Mon musicians and dancers, dressed in colourful costumes, swirl mystically to slow-dancing tempo. These dances are suffused with theological stuff. What one may call sentimental range of lyrics, easily take on the shape of hymns. And, dances which have been evolved by common practices over the years, fall into ritual, ceremonial and social dances. All the types are popular with fun-loving Ladakhis.

In the folklore of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh is embodied the heritage of the peoples' dynamic, though chequered past, as well as the spirit of beauty.

CHAPTER 13

Music of Kashmir

*Ms. Sapna Raina**

Music is an important part of culture and reflects the life-style of a place and its inhabitants. In Kashmir, there are various categories of traditional music which represent the life-style, customs, food, dress, and socio-cultural celebrations of Kashmiris. No celebration or festival is complete without the folk song pertaining to it. These folk songs tell us about the culture of Kashmiris by their content, style of singing and the tune.

Kashmiris are mostly religious minded. Their religious temperament can be traced from the *'Vanvun'* which is a compulsory item to be sung on marriages and yagnopavit. It begins with the prayer to God:

शोकलम् करिथ वनवुन ह्योतये
शोभफल ह्युतुय माजे भवाने।

The deep faith in religion can also be discerned from the contents of *Lalnavun*. *Lalnavun* is *lori* in Hindi and Iullaby in English. It is sung to make the baby fall asleep.

जसदा क्या अऽस बागिवान
यस यिथ्य टोठेई सन्तान
बलबद्र त ब्ययि, कृष्ण हल्दर
हो हो करय, हो हो करय।।

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In states like Uttar Pradesh or Rajasthan, one comes across *'jija-sali'* or *'devar-bhabi'* folk songs which have cheap and at times vulgar contents. One would never come across such vulgar folk songs in Kashmir which reflects our cultural grace.

'Chhakri' is a very popular folk-song of Kashmir. When one hears *Chhakri*, the total Kashmiri culture flashes before one's eyes. *Tumbakhnari* (a sort of dholak) and *noet* (earthen pitcher) are used as the accompaniments to its singing. When *chhakri* is in its full swing, people get up in ecstasy and start dancing which presents a unique environment of Kashmir.

Rauf is a folk-dance of Kashmir which is said to be inspired by natural beauty. It is the imitation of the love-making of the black bee and the flower which produces a harsh and unclear sound, comes forward and moves backwards for a long period. This movement of the black-bee is seen in the dance steps of *rauf*. *Rauf* is performed by the young ladies only, by interlinking each other's arms and dancing in their traditional dresses and ornaments, in a highly delicate and sophisticated manner. This dance goes a long way in reflecting the beauty, softness and grace of the people of the Valley.

Kashmir is mainly rice-producing province of Jammu and Kashmir state and as such the staple diet of the people here is rice. We have songs which are sung by farmers while paddy-farming. It is not an easy task to cultivate land and then make it suitable for rice plants. It requires strenuous efforts. But by singing the songs which are known as *nenda baith*, the task becomes easy and enjoyable.

Kashmir is blessed with flower blossoms, chirping of birds, sounds of fountains and water-falls during spring season. Songs sung during this time are known as *sonth gyavun*. On holidays, Kashmiri families visit the famous Mughal Gardens and enjoy by singing melodious songs in chorus.

Folk songs pertaining to the boatmen of Kashmir are known as *hainz-baith*. They have their own contents and style. Minstrel songs of Kashmir known as Sufiyana music is the classical music of Kashmir.

Hence, we can safely conclude that music has been and will continue to constitute an integral part of the culture of Kashmir. Kashmiri music is the essence and soul of the Kashmiris.

PART - III

PRESENTATION PAPERS : THE GLOBAL DIASPORA AND THE NEED FOR REFORM MOVEMENT

CHAPTER 14

Towards A Global Reform Movement Among Kashmiri Pandits*

*Prof. S. Bhatt***

INTRODUCTION

At the outset we may ask ourselves as to when do we need a reform movement? A reform movement is perhaps necessary when a community is in difficult circumstances such as the Kashmiri Pandits find themselves in today's world. Our community is uprooted from its environments in Kashmir and its members are scattered all over the world. For a decade since 1990, people belonging to this great community find themselves in an uncharted ocean, not knowing where to go and where to look for direction. Their cultural heritage from Kashmir is disintegrating. The response to this historical challenge is to start a reform movement within us.

Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta deserves our praise in organising this volume of *Vitasta* journal in memory of a great son of Kashmir, Shri Kashyap Bandhu, who in 1930s and 1940s led a reform movement among KPs in Kashmir. The issues he focussed then concerned widow marriage, female education, dowry reform, help to poor sections of KP society, and promoting knowledge through newspapers such as Martand, Desh and Kesri. Bandhuji did

* Earlier published in Vitasta Annual Number, Calcutta, 1999-2000, vol. 33.

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succeed in achieving the goals he set forth. Today, we see the KP community as a dynamic and educated society in which females especially have excelled and the society is very enlightened. True to their heritage, Kashmiri Pandits represent leading lights in the Indian society in which Jawaharlal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Master Zinda Kaul, Dina Nath Nadim and Prof. Jialal Kaul are a few bright examples. Kashmiri Pandits also carry with them historically a spiritual heritage par excellence represented by Lal Ded, Rupa Bhawani and many more outstanding saints and sages, and in our time, by Swami Lakhmanjoo and Bhagwan Gopinathji. These seers are classic examples of great spiritual beings of the world who spoke for all mankind. In the present day world of science and scientific exploration when the emphasis is on man to mankind approach, these seers throw light on global peace and harmony. They create hope for those who seek peace in the twenty-first century. They also help in the synthesis of cultures and tolerance of religions.

Today Kashmiri Pandits need to remind themselves how they have faced difficult times in history and the response they made to the challenges. In terms of their achievements one need to go through the pages of book "The Kashmiri Pandit" by Pt. Anand Kaul (Utpal Publication) first published in 1924. He says, for example, at page 74: "There is hardly any Indian state where a Kashmiri Pandit has not been at one time or other Prime Minister . . . . At present Rajah Sir Daya Kishan Kaul is the Chief Minister of Patiala, Sir Sukhdev Prasad Kak is the Prime Minister of Jodhpur, Colonel Kailash Narayan Haksar is the Finance Member of Gwalior and Pandit Piare Kishen Wattal is the Foreign and Political Minister of Bikaner . . . ." The list cited by Pt. Anand Kaul is a long one and need not be reproduced here fully. At another place Kaul refers to the genesis of Kashmiri Pandits. At page 29, he writes that "Kashmiri Pandits have ever been renowned for their genius and higher proficiency in learnings." He elaborates further the past history of Kashmiri Pandits : "In short, Kashmir was a grant arena of sciences and arts . . . There are poets, philosophers, grammarians, historians, astronomers and physicians, who, while living, shone like bright luminaries in the firmament. These masterminds and great thinkers immortalised themselves by writing books on different branches of sciences . . which are the wonders of the world."

I suggest strongly to the younger generation in particular to read this book on Kashmiri Pandits by Pt. Anand Kaul. They will get a glimpse from this slim volume on the great heritage of intellect and spirit that KPs have. Kaul refers to the sublime simplicity of KPs who were rishis, sages, hermits and ascetics, who cared less for worldly enjoyment with minimum of subsistence (page 1). I think these values about Kashmiri Pandits are even true in modern times. These are imperishable traits of KPs that help us revive our heritage and meet the challenges of modern times. These values have a splendour of their own. They indeed make KPs represent a higher stock of human civilisation. KPs belong to a different gene pool which has been preserved in the United States, as indicated by one of our leading biologists, Dr. T.N. Khoshoo.

Rajatarangini and Other Sources on K.P.

Rajatarangini, as we know, is a classic on Kashmiri history of the Middle Ages. It was written by a KP called Kalhana Pandit during 1148-49 A.D. in Sanskrit language. As M.A. Stein writes in *Rajatarangini* : "Kalhana's family was Brahman by caste. Sanskrit learning of the type displayed in the *Rajatarangini* has, in Kashmir, as elsewhere in India, been cultivated chiefly if not exclusively, by Pandits of Brahman descent", (pages 7-8). Kalhana was proud of being a Brahmin, says Stein. He had studied Saivism and other literary epics. He, therefore, represents very much the KP literary and spiritual background for which KPs are known in history and current period. Some of the leading scholars of present day like Dr. B.N. Pandit can compare well with Kalhana's scholarship.

In another historical book "The Valley of Kashmir", Walter R. Lawrence wrote in 1895 about Kashmiri Pandits :

> They (KPs) are a very intelligent and intellectual race of men, of excellent manners, and often very charming and amusing companions. They are fluent and ready writers. They can undergo great strain and fatigue when necessity arises, in spite of their soft, gentle appearance. They often amass great wealth in a short time, but they are very generous and lavish in their expenditure, and their money soon goes. It is to be regretted that they have not built any work of public utility in their beloved city. (Page 282, 1996 Edition by Kashmir Kitab Ghar, Jammu).

Lawrence mentions that Kashmiris normally like to stay and work in the valley of Kashmir, quoting a Kashmiri proverb "*chari chu kandi thari peth karar*" – meaning that a bird is content when it is rested on its branch with thorns. How much has world changed since the last hundred years for KPs? A handful of people are now scattered all over the world, a global diaspora indeed.

So much for the historical leaning and background of KP community. Let us now examine our problems of present day and how a reform movement can be launched world-wide to redeem our honour and heritage and work with common brotherhood and unity in a vastly expanded world. What essentially inspires us is that our community consists of people who are simple, noble and creative individuals. We have an outstanding history behind us of service to mankind. We are genetically a sublime people and have much to contribute to modern civilisation in many fields of science and technology and in developing a harmonious world. We stand on pillars built by our great saints and sages who were spiritually most enlightened. Our ancestors are of the likes of Kalhana Pandit and Lal Ded who have made their place in history and created enlightenment for mankind. The present is a dark period of terrorism in Kashmir. Wisdom from history must prevail sooner and harmony and peace should return to the valley.

Parameters of a New Reform Movement for Kashmiri Pandits

According to the needs of our time and in view of dispersal of Kashmiri Pandit society around the world, I suggest the following points which may form the basis of a new reform movement of KP for the 21st century which we have entered. I hope these views are common to all and meet with the expectations of all sections of our community. These issue are : (1) Unity and brotherhood, (2) Preserving KP cultural heritage, (3) Help to weaker sections of our society, (4) Keeping alive Kashmiri language, (5) KP population centres, (6) Maintaining links with cultural and spiritual centres in Kashmir, (7) Creation of new centres of KP culture and history outside Kashmir, (8) Promoting global peace and harmony.

1. Unity and brotherhood

A major challenge before us is to keep our identity for the future. This can be achieved by promoting unity among all sections

of our society in various parts of the world. Distance is bound to separate us. However, modern communications help us to promote unity. We indeed have to inspire among us a new brotherhood based on our common cultural heritage. We belong to a group of saints and sages from Kashmir who were members of a large family. Let us not forget we are descendants of Lal Ded, Parmanand, Rup Bhawani and Bhagwan Gopinath, and people of their generation. Our heritage and genetic background should help evolve a new spirit of brotherhood and unity. We cannot therefore get lost among 6 billion people of the world.

2. Preserving KP Cultural Heritage

Each community has its own culture which gives it form and shape. In spite of problems of history and external incursions into Kashmir, KP heritage has survived for the past over thousand years or more. Kalhana wrote *Rajatarangini* in 1149 A.D. In this historical treatise he has described the outstanding virtue and cultural richness of KPs. These qualities have come down with us to this day. Our spiritual life, cultural festivals, marriage rituals, and thirst for knowledge and excellence form a distinct part of our cultural make-up. Therefore, we need to strengthen our cultural, spiritual, and educational centres. New cultural centres need to be established in various geographical areas. Some pioneers have done tremendous work to establish new cultural institutions. Shri Pran Nath Kaul, for example, has dedicated towards opening temples for propagation of spiritual life of Bhagwan Gopi Nath. Others in New Delhi have established centres for Kashmir Shaivism propagated by revered Swami Lakhmanjoo. Shri M.K. Kaw, President of Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society and currently Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of India, is making plans for an international cultural and educational centre for KPs in Pamposh Enclave, New Delhi. Mr. J.N. Kaul of AIKS has constructed Hari Parbat and several Schools in and around Delhi. A host of dedicated people among our migrant population have done a yoeman's work in Jammu and created temples like Kheer Bhawani etc. And the philanthropist and creative social workers have built cultural centres in Calcutta and Bombay, apart from many other centres being planned elsewhere and in overseas in USA and Canada. Therefore, we need not be disheartened with our progress. After all as Master Zinda Kaul says in a song and a prayer :

Thou art the knowledge of the seekers,
Though art the trance of mystics
Though Brahm, thou Yazdan;
Life and Light of the world.

(See Dr. A.N. Raina's book *Zinda Kaul*, Makers of Indian Literature, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1974, page 26).

Master Zinda Kaul thus pays tribute to our cultural and mystical history by offering the above prayer. Indeed, a common prayer book will be very useful for all KPs. Bhagwan Gopinath's prayer book in about 150 stanzas prepared by Prof. Janki Nath Sharma should be a model, as it contains all important prayers generally recited by KPs. A set of common festivals such as Herath, Navreh, Zeth Ashtami for Ragina Devi and a day for Sharika Devi will be useful to remind us of our spiritual life the community followed in Kashmir.

3. Help to Weaker Sections

Our reform movement should be directed to the upliftment of the poor and weaker sections of our society. This includes those unfortunate migrant brethren who are lodged in refugee camps in Jammu and other parts of the country. The entire KP community may draw a world-wide plan to collect finances and resettle our poor members who have left their hearths and homes in Kashmir. In a recent address to Kashmir Education Society in Pamposh Enclave in New Delhi, late Mr. T.N. Kaul, former Foreign Secretary and an eminent writer, said repeatedly that our first duty is to help migrant KPs living in refugee camps in Jammu in particular. We may even involve international financial institutions to provide aid. Those KPs now living in USA and Canada can help this cause which is dear to all, and demands our utmost attention. In general, our society should evolve norms to generate help to poor sections of our society. During 1947 when KP exodus took place from the valley because of the tribal invasion from Pakistan, many old KPs did provide help to resettle the new comers.

4. Kashmiri Language

Language is a key to knowledge. Kashmir has been a seat of learning in history. Kashmiri language can unfold a lot of

historical wisdom contained in our ancient scriptures. Anand Kaul in his work "The Kashmiri Pandit" reminds us that in the middle ages particularly "no scholar could be considered well accomplished unless and until he had associated himself with the illustrious learned men in Kashmir . . . ". He quotes Hieun Tsiang who visited Kashmir in 631 AD and engaged himself in studying Sanskrit : "The people of Kashmir love learning and are well-cultured. Since centuries learning has been held in great respect in Kashmir."

Kashmiri language should, therefore, be promoted among our researchers and young scholars. Foreign scholars should be encouraged to work upon our ancient literature. It was the efforts of M.A. Stein and W.R. Lawrence who made research studies on Kashmiri literature and history, and on Lalded's *Vaakhs*.

Among the common people, Kashmiri language is a tool for communication and a means to share common brotherhood. A minimum training in the use of Kashmiri language should form part of our global reform movement. Through Kashmiri language our younger generation can acquire knowledge about our culture, history and eminent saints and people.

5. KP Population Centres

It is but natural that with the dispersal of KP society from the valley of Kashmir, new population centres, although in small scale, have emerged outside Kashmir. My submission here is that our social leaders should be able to identify such new colonies, inform our society members to take advantage of such habitat, and make such centres attractive and habitable. Each colony should have cultural centres apart from usual social amenities. Sometimes, the AIKS and Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi, should hold annual conferences in these centres by rotation. There should be a sense of unity and belonging between various population centres. Amenities should be provided for visiting KPs from one colony to the other. Hawans may be organised on a mass scale in one centre where people from other colonies can participate. Spiritual festivals help people renew their association. We should not be isolated from each other. At the same time, we should plan to build new colonies to meet future demands of our members. It is also possible

that older people from USA etc. can settle down in KP colonies in India where facilities exist for group life and for spiritual purposes. I hope the AIKS can come out with a paper on KP habitat movement which is a vital part of our reform movement. Such a document can inform places of KP settlement, number of people in each colony, facilities available, etc.

6. Maintaining links with Cultural/Spiritual Centres in Kashmir

Kashmiri Pandits' cultural and spiritual heritage emanates from the valley of Kashmir. As such, our centres of culture and spiritual excellence that exist in Kashmir should continue to inspire us wherever we are. I believe that each one of us should be visiting Kashmir and draw the bliss from our temples and historical monuments. Our society should now organise maintenance and upkeep of places like Kheer Bhawani in Tula Mula, Sharika Devi Mandir in Hari Parbat, Shri Amar Nath Mandir, Raghunath Mandir, the Ram Chander Temple complex near S.P. College, Maa Ishta Devi temple complex in Srinagar and a host of other historical monuments and pilgrim places. We may be able to recruit *pujaris* from Jammu and other places who can perform pujas. Necessary accommodation may be constructed at these sites for visiting pilgrims. At least in Tula Mula, Ishta Devi Mandir and Hari Parbat and Raghunath temple enough rooms should be provided for people visiting from places within the valley and from outside Kashmir. Let our bright and prosperous sons in USA in particular donate liberally for safeguarding our temples and monuments in Kashmir. The AIKS and other cultural bodies can organise groups of people visiting the above temples on festival days like Jeth Ashtami. During my visit to the valley in October 1998 there was much less evidence of interest shown by KP social institutions in proper maintenance of our spiritual centres. This may be due to present security conditions in Kashmir. Let a group of dedicated persons undertake this work and ask for world-wide funding. Terrorism may last some more years in Kashmir. But we need not neglect this work. We need not forget our responsibility towards our historical centres of spiritual excellence.

7. Creation of new Cultural and Educational Centres outside Kashmir

In view of KPs having moved outside the valley in recent years, new centres for education and cultural activities are needed in many parts of India and outside India. Some attempts for institution-building have been made in New Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay etc. Kashmiri Samiti has during the past 50 years illumined the minds of KPs and others by spiritual and cultural programmes. *Koshur Samachar* has provided information on our day to day life. The *Samachar* has produced special numbers on KP heritage from time to time. Therefore, we are grateful to those who serve in the Samiti and also in AIKS for their social services to our community in difficult times.

There is need to link the above mentioned cultural centres in India with overseas centres. Each centre should have at least a hall, a museum, depicting our saints and sages through history. Like Calcutta KP Sabha, each centre should produce a news-letter or an annual journal reflecting the activities performed by the regional centre.

On a wider scale we need an international cultural, educational centre such as is being envisaged in Pamposh Enclave in New Delhi. This KP Colony has assumed the importance of a place of pilgrimage because of its temples of Bhagwan Gopi Nath and Shiva, and the cultural activities of the colony. Many old and prominent KP members reside in Pamposh Enclave. An international centre should, therefore, come up which will link KP heritage with Kashmir on the one hand and provide links to other cultural centres in India and abroad. Thus Saivism, Sufism and knowledge about Kashmir's history can be developed. Research works on our ancestors and their intellectual and spiritual attainments can be organised. The world will be richer when old knowledge from Kashmir is combined with modern developments in science and technology. Prof. Iliya Prigogine, a Nobel-laureate in Physics, has in his book "Order out of Chaos" shown effectively how eastern mysticism and modern post-Einstein science philosophy can throw light on problems of our civilisation. Scholars and seers with wide interest and vision can be invited to think of the past and present and synthesize cultural and scientific

values for order and harmony in the universe. Unbridled religious fundamentalism is costing mankind dearly. Religious terrorism is a threat to the existence of peaceful world order. However, there is a parallel world-wide movement for global harmony. Therefore Kashmiri heritage has ideas to promote global life with peace and progress.

8. Promoting Global Peace and Harmony

The contemporary reform movement should also focus on promoting global peace and harmony. KP heritage symbolises harmony and common spirituality of mankind. KPs have historical credentials to perform this onerous task for our civilisation. Our historians like Prof. Ravinder Kumar Pandit and sociologists like Prof. T.N. Madan and others should take the centre stage and patronise our cultural and educational institutions and spread global peace and harmony. One has to simply look through the pages of history of KPs to reflect on the subject of global harmony. I have a feeling that our younger generation scholars are well adapted to forge knew ideas of excellence in science and society based on the mystic experience of the past. We have every hope that the 21st century will be a period of enlightenment that our ancestors have been dreaming about.

In conclusion, I submit that we have to look for Kashyap Bandhus of our time who will initiate new reforms movement for KPs. I have attempted to sketch a brief outline of the pattern of the movement. Some may agree with me whereas others may differ. But some action is needed of course to meet the challenges of our times and preserve our identity. Stagnation will not help our society. I see a movement within all of us. The question is to combine our efforts together and see the light ahead of us. Progress is bound to come as progress involves addition of knowledge, wisdom and social harmony.

CHAPTER 15

Kashmiri Pandits - Their Search for an Identity

*D. N. Kaul, IPS**

Kashmiri Pandits cannot compare themselves with Jews, except probably for their being persecuted periodically down the march of Time, and the consequent diaspora that they have been suffering. Persecution and torture at the hands of semi-barbarians like the Afghans and the early Sultanate in Kashmir could possibly be explained away, though not condoned under any circumstances, as fanaticism of the worst religious bigot who was totally alien to the finer sentiments of humanism which characterise a genuine religious faith, but similar barbaric behaviour in the concluding quarter of the 20th century is inexplicable except in terms of education and worldwide dissemination of the philosophy behind human rights having passed bye the Kashmiri Muslim. However, an in-depth study and scrutiny of the causes of the rise and persistence of militancy in Kashmir is not germane to the issue under discussion, viz., the need to preserve the identity of the Kashmiri Pandits in their forced dispersal from their ancestral abode in Kashmir into penny packets scattered over the vast expanse of India.

The dictionary meaning of Identity is the establishment by an individual of an association with a person of similar background not only on an individual level but as a group. The association,

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further, visualises the establishment of a common bond of sympathy with the group or the community. This finds expression overtly in the common celebrations of festivals, religious and social, which include matrimonial alliances and other fraternal congregations and conclaves.

It hardly needs being dilated upon as to why the search for identity is basic to an individual who is of this world and who has not reneged from society in search of peace within and therefore withdrawn himself from the society, the group or the community he hailed from. So long as one stays put in the social group whose product he is by dint of his birth and unbringing, the need for identity is inevitable and a basic human need. No one, including people whose sense of individuality is acute, can live by himself without being anchored to a group which lends him a station and fortifies his sense of belonging. We human beings have a basic urge to be acknowledged as a social unit and to share the common fate of that society so as to weather "the arrows and slings of outrageous fortune" which can visit anyone. The groups' sharing of that misfortune assuages its sharp sting and lends courage and a feeling that one is not all alone in a world which, shorn of its tantalising attributes, is essentially alien.

It is perhaps ironical that the ultimate aim of a Hindu's life is to attain 'Moksha' - a merger with the Absolute - and thereby lose completely his individual identity. That is what the evolution of the individual visualised by the 'Karma' theory - basic to the Hindu concept - is heading for. Poet Ghalib, in one of his mystical verses, has lamented his fate in emerging as an individual unit of the vast Absolute. Or again, in another verse, he bemoans the lot of man who has emerged as a tiny stream out of the vast, coastless expanse of the Sea of Life. However, leaving alone the philosophic aspect of identity, one is concerned with the indispensable need of identity on this earthly plane. The need is not questionable. Life would otherwise be unlivable as a flotsam without any sense of belonging.

The problem is how this identity can be preserved and sustained in the face of the inhuman dispersal that has been forced on the community, a cruel conspiracy of circumstances outside its control. I personally visualise that our endeavour should be to

return to Kashmir, even as a trickle, as the circumstances permit for it is in Kashmir in whose roads, gullies and warrens our youths and our yearnings lie buried. In the ultimate analysis, a human being is a creature of his environment and he cannot live long once he is wrenched from that environment. There are instances galore where people refused to forsake their old hearths and homes for new fashionable colonies. It is in Kashmir that our sacred places like Khirbhavani and Hari Parbhat are situated. Around these shrines are inextricably woven the prayers and yearnings of our ancestors and it is these sentiments which lent meaning and depth to their lives. Besides, much community life was centered around these shrines and the festivals associated with these such as Jeshtha Ashtami and the Nauratra. As such, I advocate a gradual return to Kashmir and not its abandonment as is being advocated by some quarters which have been propagating in favour of colonies in Himachal Pradesh or Garhwal. Colonies in alien ambience do not appeal to me. Even the Jews with whom we have sought comparison had ultimately to find a home. Passivity and an exhibition of a withdrawal syndrome will obliterate our quest for Identity.

Till such time as a sizable part of the displaced community returns to its ancestral moorings, we should continue to observe the rituals individually and join *en masse* in congregational celebrations as are being held by the various K.P. Associations notably at Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta. Even in the USA and the UK, members of the community foregather in large numbers in annual camps. That would be the only way to preserve and foster an identity and a sense of belonging so essential for an individual's mental and social well-being. Only a man like Jawaharlal Nehru could react with a dismissive touch of contempt that he had ceased to be a Kashmiri and belonged to the whole of India. Lesser mortals have indispensable need to belong and find identity.

It has been advocated by certain quarters and meaningfully that K.P. parents, outside Kashmir, should teach Kashmiri language to their offspring. This, I am afraid, is a tall order. Kashmiri is only a spoken language, notwithstanding feeble attempts made to devise a script for it. Language is no doubt an important element in one's social and cultural life, but it would be a tall order to teach Kashmiri to young children when their social and academic

intercourse with fellow students has to be in Hindi or Bengali. A KP, up and coming, can still be a Kashmiri Brahmin of the purest race serene with only a nodding acquaintance with the Kashmiri language.

We have to be thankful to the last Moghul king in whose court a savvy Kashmiri Pandit named Ved Lal Bhan had acquired the status of a senior courtier by dint of his wit that he came to be called by the king "the Kashmiri Pandit". We would otherwise have had to be content with being an unknown part of the vast Brahmanical order of India. To preserve the reputation of this exclusivity, we must strive to shine in the academic and social fields and not be content with the humble life of an office scribe.

CHAPTER 16

Preserving our Identity - Role of the Mother Tongue

*A. N. Kaul**

The last decade of the 20th century was witness to many ups and downs for our country and its people. As a community, Kashmiri Pandits have had bitter memories of that turbulent decade. Lakhs and lakhs of our kinsmen were uprooted from the land of their birth, with their population badly decimated, partly as a result of barbaric killings by the local militants and foreign mercenaries and partly due to countless deaths caused by trauma, acute depression, mental tension and other diseases which were hitherto unknown to them, besides the accidents galore. All this was the outcome of forced separation from our roots, humiliation of living on doles of pittance and difficulties of adjusting to inhospitable climes of the hot plains of the country. For us, it has been an upheaval of an unprecedented magnitude.

Rising from Ashes

"We have wept long enough", Swami Vivekananda once said, "no more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men". Prompted perhaps by this saintly advice, our desolate brethren realised in good time that no purpose would be served by continuing to weep and lament over the loss of our precious worldly possessions, our homes and hearths and, in many cases, our nearest and dearest kith and kin. We had, after all, to survive

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somehow even in the midst of these adversities which were further compounded by total indifference to our plight by the government, the media and the people of our country in general. It was this instinct of survival which helped us to rise once again from the ashes; build shelters over our heads – permanent or temporary – wherever and whatever one could afford, look for alternative sources of livelihood and, above all, continue to provide to our children high academic education and technical and professional training, which has always been our topmost priority, even when we could not afford two square meals a day.

Turbulence, a blessing in disguise

We have admittedly gone through what could be described as a churning process, opening up new vistas and opportunities for our youngsters for training and jobs in areas and disciplines which one couldn't conceive of, back in the Valley. That way, the turbulence of the last decade has been for us a blessing in disguise. Our young boys and girls have fanned out and settled in different parts of India with thousands of them having gone to far-off lands, across the oceans, to the Americas, England, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, the Middle East and also to the Emirates. Many are said to have settled in Russia and the erstwhile constituents of what was once the Soviet Union. Wherever our talented doctors, engineers, scientists, chartered accountants, business and computer professionals have gone, they have proved their mettle, and made a name, rising quite high in hierarchy. They have, in turn, brought glory to their country in general and their community, in particular. We wish them all good luck and prosperity!

Mother-tongue, a casualty

In this diaspora, however, we have lost sight of one important aspect, which gives us our distinct identity and that aspect is our mother tongue, Kashmiri. We have been lamenting, day in and day out, at numerous conferences, seminars, symposia, and various other conclaves that we have lost our identity because of our having been uprooted from our homes and hearths and forced by circumstances to reside and eke out our livelihood in unfamiliar and inhospitable environs. As a matter of fact, no one can question the logic of this statement. But have we ever tried to

introspect, even for a moment, as to the primary reason of our prevailing feeling of identity crisis, apart from the discriminatory treatment meted out to us at the hands of the Central and State Governments. This undoubtedly is the wilful neglect by us of our mother tongue which in reality gave us the identity we are sorely missing today.

Crisis of our own making

The crisis that we find ourselves engulfed in today, is actually a crisis of our own making. Who, one would like to ask, compels us to begin communicating even with our infants, right from the moment of their birth, in a language other than the mother tongue, the language spoken by the parents themselves. This virus of speaking to our children in Hindi, Urdu or English had affected us even while residing in the Valley or outside decades before our recent exile. While most of the parents continued to converse among themselves and with other family members in Kashmiri, they would immediately switch over to Hindi or English when it came to talking to their kids. What a strange irony! They had perhaps begun to nurse a false notion that if they talked to their children in Kashmiri, the latter may not be able to get ahead in public schools or other educational institutions with confidence. Little did they realise that their own parents and grand parents who had their grooming in typical Kashmiri environs and who had Kashmiri alone as the medium of their communication inside their homes and the society outside, had attained high degree of proficiency and excellence in every other language which their interest or avocation called upon them to learn, be it English, Sanskrit, Persian or Urdu. The scholastic attainments of our ancestors are indeed legendary.

While settling in different parts of the country or in foreign lands, our children, including the grown-up ones, take not only delight but also deep interest in learning new languages, Indian and foreign, but overlook the fact that by neglecting their own mother-tongue, they are fast losing their identity as Kashmiri Pandits which now remains confined only to their surnames so long as they choose to keep them intact. No other community in India - Bengalis, Tamilians, Kannadigas, Telugus, Oriyas, Maharashtrians, Malayalees, Sindhis, Punjabis and others - has

become a victim of this craze. They in fact take legitimate pride in talking with each other, in public and private, in their own mother-tongue. While learning and attaining proficiency in other languages, they ensure that their children do not lose touch with their mother tongue, in which they speak not only in their homes but with their friends and colleagues outside. Contrary, however, is the case with us. What to speak of children and youth, even elderly people of the community, who were born, grew up and lived most of the time in the valley, have also given up speaking in Kashmiri.

Mother-tongue is the strongest link which helps us and our progeny down the line to communicate intimately with each other and also to establish instant rapport with our kinsmen wherever we happen to meet them, in different parts of India or in foreign lands. It gives us a sense of belonging to our land of birth, Kashmir, and to our common social and cultural heritage. Once you come to know that the person you have met in a far off land, sports a surname belonging to your community but is unable to speak in the mother-tongue, a sense of disappointment and distancing begins to set in and all hopes of conversing on the same wave length are dashed to ground.

Alienation from the Kashmiri ethos

The direct fall-out of this apathy and willful neglect of our mother-tongue has been the gradual alienation of most of our children from the mainstream of the Kashmiri ethos. They not only lack in the basic grounding of their mother-tongue, spoken as well as written, but they are also drifting away by and by from all other facets associated with this language - the music, the literature, the art, the essential rituals and even insofar as their culinary tastes are concerned. It is indeed painful to watch our young boys and girls and small children gradually withdrawing from or avoiding our social get-togethers or family functions because they find the surroundings uncomfortable owing to their unfamiliarity with their mother-tongue.

For bringing ourselves to such a sorry pass, we have no one to blame but ourselves. As pointed out earlier, we are perhaps the only community in India which fights shy of communicating with our children and, of late, even among the adults, in our mother-

tongue. By doing so, we are doing an incalculable harm to our identity as a homogenous ethnic group. It must not be forgotten that Kashmiri Pandits who had left the valley centuries ago due to circumstances prevailing at that time and settled in other parts of the country, also committed the same mistake and are now ruing over it. In total disregard of the consequences, we are compounding the same mistake.

It is no comfort to hear from some of our community members that even if their children are unable to speak and converse in Kashmiri, they do understand the purport of what we talk at home. That is not enough. Unless we constantly encourage our kids and teenage children to talk, without inhibitions, in their own mother-tongue, we cannot promote and preserve the language. Young parents have a much greater responsibility in this regard. They have to begin this experiment from the cradle itself and watch the wonderful results as their children grow up. It is high time that we listen to the wail of our sadly neglected mother tongue and take a solemn pledge that from now on, we shall converse with our children at home only in Kashmiri and no other language. You will find that in no time will they pick up the nuances of the language and begin to talk to you in sweet broken syllables. Enjoy it and encourage them to open up further and make it a point to speak only in their mother tongue with their Kashmiri friends and classmates as well. In due course, you will find that they will feel at home with the language.

Access to Kashmiri Literature and Music

Our mother tongue, Kashmiri, is as sweet and rich in vocabulary as any other language of our country. It has a vast literature, rich and interesting folklore and poetry, as also enchanting music, which unfortunately is now alien to our children. It is our foremost duty, as responsible parents, to remedy the situation even now and expose our children to this wonderful heritage of ours and bring them back into the mainstream of true Kashmiriat.

For this, it is very important that we cultivate their interest and taste for Kashmiri music and poetry by frequently playing recorded cassettes at home and taking them out to Kashmiri musical evenings and concerts, which should be organised by our

various Samitis and Sabhas at frequent intervals. This could more easily be done in colonies which has the largest concentration of Kashmiri populace. Steps also need to be taken to organise debates, elocution and poetry recitation contents in Kashmiri for children and publicly reward their excellence. Staging of dramas and plays in Kashmiri language should be encouraged by harnessing new talents, with adequate financial back up, to revive interest in our mother-tongue. Musical nights need to be organised more frequently by inviting top Kashmiri singers from Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country to perform in Delhi and other major cities and towns. We are fortunate to have talented artistes like Kailash Mehra, Neerja Pandit, Bhajan Sopori, Vijay Malla, Vijay Kaul, Rajendar Kachroo and scores of dubbing young boys and girls who could be invited to give performances. These artistes must be suitably honoured with Awards and Distinctions.

Problem of the Script

Insofar as the written language and its literature goes, it must be admitted that after the decline of the original Kashmiri script, the Sharada, common Kashmiris, apart from conversing in their mother-tongue, had not been using the language for any written communications among themselves. Even the State of Jammu and Kashmir did not bother to adopt Kashmiri as the official language and instead promoted the use of Urdu, an alien language. Later, under the Constitutional compulsions, the Persian script was adopted as the official script for the Kashmiri language, to be taught in schools. Though most of our famed writers and poets wrote volumes in this very script, majority of the Kashmiri Pandits, particularly during the post-independence period, could not have access to this vast literature because of their total unfamiliarity with the Persian script.

Realising the gravity of the situation, it was *Koshur Samachar* in Delhi which made a bold attempt to present this vast Kashmiri literature, in prose and poetry, in Devnagri script, for the benefit of Kashmiri Pandits residing in India and abroad. Doing this involves painful efforts of the Editors in rewriting the matter in Devnagari script from the Persian script, but has been undertaken as a labour of love.

Our young boys and girls, even men and women of the older generation, are advised to spend some time very month in browsing through the pages of the Kashmiri section of *Koshur Samachar* to enjoy the fascinating prose and poetry not only of the bygone days but also the literary compositions of contemporary writers and poets, young and old, who regularly contribute to this journal. The promotion of our mother-tongue in the Devanagri script, with minimal adaptations and transliteration signs, and the words and expressions with which we are more familiar, for the past four decades and more, has been widely acknowledged. We feel genuinely proud of having made our humble contribution to this endeavour. The only regret is that while many of our non-Kashmiri friends and patrons are getting interested in learning our language through *Koshur Samachar* and other publications in Devanagri script, our own community members are not taking full advantage of these efforts.

It is a matter of joy to know that Kashmiri Pandit Association, Mumbai and lately, Kashmir Sabha, Calcutta, have taken steps to organise Kashmiri language classes for their children in which even non-Kashmiri speaking children and adults are reportedly taking interest. May be, similar steps are being taken or are on the anvil, at other places also. If not, it should be done without delay. Care has, however, to be taken that the script used for such teaching is uniform and widely understood and acceptable. Kashmiri Pandits settled overseas, we understand, are more alive to this problem than us here in India and are doing quite a lot to ensure that their progeny do not lose their moorings. It is interesting to know that several Kashmiri Pandit children abroad can understand and speak influent Kashmiri and English but do not have the same proficiency in Hindi.

Apart from continuing our on-going struggle for our political survival as a distinct ethnic group, and reinforcing our claim to return to our beloved Valley with honour and dignity one day, it is important that we do not lose touch with our social, cultural and linguistic heritage, if we really mean to preserve our identity as an enlightened community. Let us be warned that we have no identity sans our mother-tongue, our dear Kashmiri language. A sustained and concerted movement shall have to be launched on a major scale by all our organisations in the country and abroad to achieve this objective.

Our young boys and girls, even men and women of the older generation, are advised to spend some time, each month in browsing through the pages of the Kashmiri section of *Koshur Samachar* to enjoy the fascinating prose and poetry not only of the bygone days but also the literary compositions of contemporary writers and poets, young and old, who regularly contribute to this journal. The promotion of our mother tongue in the Devanagri script with minimal adaptations and transliteration signs, and the words and expressions with which we are more familiar for the past four decades and more, has been widely acknowledged. We feel genuinely proud of having made our humble contribution to this endeavour. The only regret is that while many of our non-Kashmiri friends and patrons are getting interested in learning our language through *Koshur Samachar* and other publications in Devanagri script, our own community members are not taking full advantage of these efforts.

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Apart from continuing our on going struggle for our political survival as a distinct ethnic group and reinforcing our claim to return to our beloved Valley with honour and dignity one day, it is important that we do not lose touch with our ancient cultural and linguistic heritage. It is equally important to preserve our identity as an ethnic and cultural group. Let it be stressed that we have no identity as a community if we lose our dear Kashmiri language. A sustained and concerted movement shall have to be launched on a major scale by all our organisations in the country and abroad to achieve this objective.

CHAPTER 17

God, Truth and Terrorism

Moti Lal Bhatt, 'Shafaq' Bharati

As *ashraf ulmakhluqaat*, the best of creation, it is not for man to live by sheer competition at the physical level. That is for the lower order of creation like birds and beasts. As a social being endowed with the ability to judge soundly and deal sagaciously with facts as they relate to life and conduct, and the capacity to make due use of knowledge, man is under an inviolable commandment of God to lead a life at mental plane in cooperation with not only his fellow creatures, but also the lowest order of God's creation. He has always to remember the divine lesson that the weal of a person, a community or a nation, is unfailingly contained in the weal of all that exists.

A vast majority of people in the world have come to recognise the imperative need for a corporate life with corporate responsibilities for generating an atmosphere of collective peace and promoting global security for all, being the basis for mutual progress and prosperity. They are consciously working towards attainment of a life as 'mansion of mirth' raised on the pillars of intelligent cooperation at the mental level.

It is disgusting to observe that many men's minds are still irresponsibly working backwards rather than moving forward with the sands of time. Unfortunately, their understanding continues to be ever increasingly clouded by the manifest mist of irrationality, imperfection and malice. They sing in the Glory of God the Great, but do not even try to understand and unfold the

spirit of His divine teachings. They sermonise on life here and hereafter, but do not care to comprehend the real plan and purpose of life as ordained by Him. They talk of man and his morality, but are astronomical units away from his inborn divine nature - pure and holy - which is his eternal glory. They are ego-bound and being so they are not prepared to give credence to and show tolerance and respect for religions (we prefer to call *dharma*) other than their own. They little know or not know at all that all systems of faith and worship stem from God, are established by Him through His Holy incarnations or through His chosen messengers and flow back to Him, being the only and eternal source of all that existed, all that exists and all that will come to exist, even as water of all rivers ultimately flows back into oceans from where it comes.

Following the letter of the law and not its spirit, these double-edged men, serving their vested interests in power and pleasure, deliberately and adroitly misinterpret gospels of their religion to depose reason and love of truth and create reactionary orthodoxy among the whole mass of its innocent, docile followers from their early age. It is this misled youth who are trained and abundantly used as an army of ignorant zealots and militant fighters to demolish, through violence of deed and demeanour, values of democracy, secularism and also annihilate other systems of faith and worship to cleanse them, as they say, from the climes in their focus and establish their own order. This is what they, in all seriousness, consider as *deen ka kaam* and do it as armed *jehaad*, holy war, in the name of God the Great, with the seal of religious approval.

Their holy book proclaims that God is the most Merciful from beginning to end; all praise belongs to Him; He is the Lord of all the worlds; He is the All-sustaining; He is the Uppermost, the Highest. As a spiritual message, these are the truths which are eternal and universal and lead man on a sure path to spiritual realisation, resulting in high standards and purposes of life.

When God is eulogised and adorned as *raheem-o-Kareem, raham karneywalla aur bakhshneywalla*; when He is understood as the *khaliq akbar, azeem maalik-al-kainaat*, and further when He is regarded as *sab se ooncha, sab kuchh kaayim rakhneywalla aur chalaaneywalla; sab ki parvarish karneywalla aur zinda rakhneywalla;*

how then can such a Universal God be presented as partisan or parochial by His nature? How can He, and why should He allow himself to be exclusively associated with and entangled by name in the voice of a particular religion sounded by some of its followers as misled fanatic supporters of a selfish, irreligious cause, many times, solely and deliberately intended to harm, in a high-handed manner, those outside the fold of the religion of these ignorant zealots and thus consent to use and abuse of His Supersacred name? The Universal God will never do that in any case. He is the Absolute - One free from any control. He is *mutaliq ul-inaam*, that is, *Khud-mukhtaar*. He cannot be led nor will He lead what is not His will. And, His will can never be ill-will for His subjects, He being Beneficent, Benignant and Benevolent. These bigoted persons, the products of *madrassahs*, religious schools, proceeding as in a state of hypnosis, under the cover of ill-founded protection of religious justification provided by their religious teachers, to do wrong against humanity, should realise that they are sinning against God.

Conversely, if Holy God of the sacred pronouncement contained in their holy book of religion is particularised by them for their adopted and adapted God; if the worlds under His Lordship they consider the worlds to be exclusively theirs; and if the attribute *All-sustaining* is construed by them to connote sustaining all belonging to their faith; and further if being Merciful is taken by them to mean as showering of His mercy on people of their creed alone; in that case a strangely inconceivable situation surfaces. There will have to be more than one God to provide for a multi-God system whereby each one of all other religions will have their own God or at least have one additional Supreme Being for followers of all other religions to worship and serve as common God.

But the moot point is that for the same worlds, the same universe, the same cosmos with the same boundless expanse of space, holding everything and anything, physical and nonphysical, spiritual and non-spiritual, of gross and subtle nature as constituent components of all that is, how would there be more than one Super - Cosmic Immutable Divine Primal Power – Absolute and God of worship – as that invisible whole which originates this partly visible, partly invisible whole of space, time and change (cosmos),

while that whole (Primal Power) remains the whole even after this whole (cosmos) has come out of that whole (Primal Power).

The philosophical thought of profound meaning conveying that *that* whole being the source of *this* whole certainly points towards one and the same primordial non-dual Reality as being the fountainhead of the cosmos. The concept of the basic unitary Reality is further supported amply by the very fact that what is evolved and evolves into all that we see around us in the universe, despite being immersed in phenomenal multiplicity of names and forms stemming from diversified (call it) creation or manifestation, is so orderly patterned, highly systematised, meticulously spread and organised, strictly disciplined and perfectly harmonised, that what appears, on a casual surface view, as conveying conflict and contradiction is not so in essence. There is an undercurrent which flows through all that is and, time and again, gently speaks to listening ears, vividly presents to curious eyes and quietly murmurs to discerning minds the unrivalled divine architectural excellence as sublimity and beauty of unity in diversity, obviously masterminded by the only Grand Artificer - One without a parallel, Omnipresent, Omnipotent Divine Being.

Whether it is the East or the West, great thinkers, renowned philosophers, superhuman seers, sages and saints, sufi *awlias*, and all those serving humanity in the spirit of service to God, the world over, also have always expounded, in their true vision, the metaphysical truth, the uncaused cause of cosmos, the Supreme Principle, the Eternal Reality, as being one and the only one.

It is that one, talking in the language of religion, who is both our Father and Mother and we are all His children. The infinite parental loving kindness He constantly bestows liberally upon us, without distinction, kindles in us the light of reverential love and adoration for Him. That gives a real meaning to life and living in this world. From finite conditioning of his mind man slowly but surely soars higher and higher towards an infinite state which is all-embracing.

As already stated, while being extra-cosmic, God is, at the same time, intra-cosmic. He is *antaryamin*, the in-dweller. Individual physical structure of every thing is the *Puri* and He

who resides in that *Puri* is the *Purusha* designated as *Adhidaivata*. He is *Hiranyagarbha*, the Cosmic Soul. All the individual embodied souls are the beams of this Cosmic Soul. It is this divine relationship which on one side links the multitude of living beings with one another and on the other side connects all beings with God as a family. It is just like a variety of flowers with a common cord passing through them and holding them together, in an orderly manner, as a charming garland with every flower having its own place and prominence. So is the case with the ways of worship followed at individual or community level in the service of the same God. Over a long period of time in human history, these ways of worship evolved as religions, each one with its own hue and flavour, and travelled down to our generation in their present form. Here the intention is not to talk of social aspects of a religion but its spiritual essence. It is religion that leads us to the Truth; gives us the knowledge supreme about ourselves; gives us an identity. We know what we are as eternal and changeless entities; where from we have taken our entry into this phenomenal world; what are our duties and functions as human beings; whereto is ultimately our exit; and further learn why and how of all this. It opens to us the gates of eternal bliss from all sides with peace all around. We look ecstatically towards the entire creation as a harmonious conglomerate of diversities. That is the beauty we behold.

The spirit that streams through this Truth is beautifully presented through a generally quoted Kashmiri proverb for common consumption, as cited here :

बाबॅु आदमस आऽस्य् ज़ॅुय गबर,
अऽक्य् रॅट आवरेन्य् अऽक्य् क़बर।

Father Adam had two sons. One chose a pyre and the other a grave. (Here the two words pyre and grave are suggestive of one becoming a Hindu and another becoming a Muslim or a Christian).

It follows, that any attempt made through any means - thought, word or deed - anytime, anywhere, by anybody or a body of persons, at individual or organisational level, more so deliberately with a sinister motive, to disrupt this Divine order

and arrangement, is equivalent in significance and effect to committing the biggest sin, the worst guilt, an unpardonable crime by showing irreverence, indignity to God. This should be clear to all. In the glorious canvas of this world as painted by that Greatest Artist himself, there is no scope, whatsoever, for any dark and dull patches of repugnant colours of fanaticism, bigotry, narrowness, fundamentalism and all that.

However, it is most unfortunate that even in modern times of scientific temper when mankind, all over the world, is assiduously trying to live and let live in peace and harmony, there are still certain sectarians, as already referred to, who are working against the clock. They seem to be determinedly and recklessly bent on driving the world back to the past days of intolerance and bloodshed. They forget that desperados like Changezkhans, Sikandar Butshikans, Hitlers and the like can no more be tolerated. One thing more. Their tyranny may have given them initial gains, but such gains are always short-lived. They melt away soon. It is the Truth which alone prevails. It is a lesson of lessons; an all-time lesson for all to absorb.

What has been happening in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, more so in the Valley of Kashmir, since the time of Pakistan's invasion in 1947, down to the present times, is a horribly shocking, dreadfully anguishing story of about 53 years of cataclysmic period of extreme tyranny. It is a heartbreaking sequence of events even for the greatest adversary of man.

The 1947 unprovoked aggression did not give the desired success to Pakistan in its nefarious design to annex the region by brute force. Their plans were foiled by Indian Armed Forces, vehemently supported by the rocky-combine of peace-loving Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus, under local leadership, with their impenetrable will to resist the onslaught. But the Pakistani war mongers rose again. In 1965 and later in 1971, they launched massive attacks with heavy arms and artillery. Their cannons did not help them. They were defeated and chased back to their barracks.

Thrice frustrated, the rulers of this neighbouring country changed their strategy from direct armed confrontation to

subversive ways, as they could not contain their hidden ill-will any more. Viciously propagating Muslim fundamentalism in and around the valley and organising militancy, terrorism etc. for a proxy war, on a wider scale, mostly through mercenaries and to an extent local innocent youth incited, enticed and pressurised for the unholy task in the name of holy religion, dons of doom from across the border masterminded surreptitious movements for an upshot. Soft targets as identified by them put ethnic cleansing on top of the roll. All this, and much more, was evilly blueprinted under an irreligious gameplan and executed with an equally irreligious zeal under the much blazoned garb of religion paraded in prominence.

1986 was the year, when mercenaries and trained militants suddenly ran amuck in Anantnag district in Kashmir creating a cyclonic terror for the innocent minuscule minority community of Hindus, popularly known as Kashmiri Pandits. They committed loot, arson, murderous assaults, kidnapping, rape etc. coupled with desecration and demolition of dozens of their religious shrines. That was a clear signal for things to follow.

The message from massacre spread for the terrorists in waiting. Gradually, it engulfed the whole valley with ever increasing intensity. They did all that terrorism means. Life and living of the minority community was made miserable. Ultimately, in the most excruciating circumstances, the entire community was hounded out *en masse* from their own homeland. The exodus started in 1989. Those few who still clung to their *mauj kasheer* were also not spared. The dastardly mass massacre of Kashmiri Pandits in villages like Wandhama and Sangrampora, killing of a large number of Sikhs in a barbaric manner at Chhatisingpora, to quote a few, bear ample testimony to bloody intentions of the bosses across the border. They have not been sparing even lives of their co-religionists who resist or condemn their wrong doings as un-Islamic.

The traumatic experiences of those times are still fresh in the minds of members of the aboriginal Kashmiri Pandit community living for the last over 10 years a disintegrated, desolate, despondent life, under severe mental depression, outside Kashmir after their forced extirpation. The pre-exodus brutalities

inflicted on the community, when given an account of, send waves of chill down the spine of listeners. Even *zaag-o-zagan* crows and kites, and butcher-birds would not have been able to stand the sight of such manslaughter committed with unusual barbarity.

That was not the end of atrocities. More heinous crimes against man and God followed. Residential houses belonging to Kashmiri Pandits were ransacked and gutted; their landed property was grabbed; sacred places of worship, temples of God were razed to ground, to the flourish of trumpets as a mark of victory, to annihilate their socio-cultural and ethno-religious moorings to plug for ever chances, if any, of their return to their homes and hearths.

Already, volumes after volumes have been written and spoken by print and broadcast media on this repugnant drama of disaster and death in Kashmir. The dramatic personae are still holding the stage. What has been briefly articulated in this write up is just by way of a passing reference.

One thing which one mourns more woefully is the worst of all damage done by this intensive and extensive pressure of tyranny to Kashmir, as a whole, as the Nature's cradle for man to evolve in God's image.

The mighty splendour of Divine awe-inspiring mounts; bewitching vales exquisitely carpeted with graceful expanse of floral spreads wafting soul soothing fragrance; roaring waterfalls orchestrating angelic music on terrestrial stage; water bodies in sylvan surroundings mirroring celestial beauty of the firmament above; providing paradisiacal setting with invigorating atmosphere around, the saffrony land of Kashmir served, over the ages, as a cosmic womb for great souls to manifest themselves in human life form as godmen of the highest order. It is these spiritual luminaries who, as inspired angels of God, wove on the looms of unifying vision and faith; with mounts as their frame, streams for the shuttles, heddles and reeds of comprehension and forbearance; the sacred fabric of togetherness, with the warp of awareness, open-mindedness and tolerance and the weft of composure, concord and reciprocity; conveying a spiritual message. The message was clear for common understanding.

It was spiritualisation of the secular life that they preached and propagated. It was a happy confluence of streams of the spiritual core of the great religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, that emerged, losing not in the process the hue and flavour of their respective spiritual sense and significance with pristine beauty. It was not a backward-looking but a resilient forward-looking ideology, which, re-emphasising nature's law of unity in diversity, the singularity of God and *wahdat-ul-wajood* that is, Unity of God with His creation - meaning God's all-pervasiveness, His divine presence in everything and everywhere - had a universal appeal for man's individual and collective existence for his development and progress to the highest excellence.

A composite culture appeared on the scene, as an orderly combination of colours resulting in an aesthetically pleasing general effect. It was unifying. It was not uniforming; unity is not uniforming. This composite culture, in essence, was advanced by a galaxy of spiritually exalted sages and sufi-saints of Kashmir, belonging to the times long past, like Lalleshwari (Lalded), Sheikh Noorudin Sheik-ul-Aalam, Muquadam Sahib, to mention a few, who filled the whole atmosphere of the Valley with flavour of the melody of music of soul in their simple sayings pouring forth sublime ideas. These sayings touched direct heart of the masses. Look ! what Lalded says :

> शिव छुय थलि-थलि रोज़ान
> मो ज़ान ह्योन्द तॅु मुसलमान।
> त्रुख अयॅ छुख तॅु पान् पर्ज़नाव
> स्वय छै साहिबस सॅूत्य् ज़ाऽनी ज़ान॥

> [Shiva is all-pervading. He is present in every particle; never differentiate between a Hindu and a Musalman. If you are shrewd and intelligent, know your own self; therein lies your acquaintance with God.]

Life in Kashmir received a positive potent direction leading it towards delightfully constructive attitude. Living became cool and comforting. The beauty and significance of inner self of man surfaced. The mist of nescience vanished. The splendour of the sun of wisdom brightened understanding. Masses drank abundantly from streams of love giving a wetting to the valley.

Kastoors and *qumirs* sang songs of spring. Kashmiris will never cease to take pride in this noble heritage. It is this Kashmir which is the Kashmir of their joy.

It is not attractive graces of natural scenic beauties alone but what all there is from the beauty of unpolluted materiality to the bliss of spirituality, as interwoven, that made Kashmir *firdous ber roye zamein*. Alas! the day when oppressive forces from across the border directed their first gun towards this *firdous* to reduce to fragments the wholeness of its fabric; to disintegrate oneness of its structure. These forces have since been struggling to destroy Kashmir. In Neronian way they are maliciously rejoicing over others' sufferings. But for how long?

What has been happening in Kashmir is unholy. It can never fit in the holy aim of God's creation. It will be undone by God through His powers. There will be a new lesson for mankind. It has happened before. It will happen once again.

The spirit of Jesu, atop the mount, may be Himalayas, will once more utter : *Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.* The earth will quake; the *ustukhans* (dry bones) of vice will be buried under their own debris. Only virtue as the *maghz* will re-emerge to re-establish its order. *Firdous* will resurrect with all the elements composing it.

Skies will smile. *Mauj Kasheer* will, in a state of ecstasy, once again embrace all her children and hold them to her warm bossom endearingly for ever. AMEN!

CHAPTER 18

AIKS : A Potential Movement of Kashmiri Pandit Diaspora

*Dr. B.K. Moza**

INTRODUCTION

All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS) is a remarkable movement of Kashmiri Pandit diaspora of twentieth century. This movement has had its organisational birth exactly two decades back and has behind it a great potential of thoughtful objectives for the survival and advancement of the scattered Kashmiri Pandit (KP) community. This is an appropriate time to review the performance of this intrinsically potential movement. Often a question mark is generally raised as to whether AIKS has come up to the objectives for which this movement was started?

In this chapter a perspective of this organization and its evolution are being discussed with a view to reviewing its achievements and shortcomings and creating a brainstrom for making it more effective and purposeful in fulfilling the objectives for which it was originally set up.

Historically, Kashmiri Pandit migrants settled in various parts of India, tried to live closer to each other for reasons of social contacts, participation in each other's moments of joy and sorrow, safety considerations, mother tongue and such commonalities, observance of festivals and festivities and for such reasons as

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matrimonial contacts and information thereof etc. Naturally it became necessary as also convenient for them to form a Society, Sabha, Association or call it by any other nomenclature to perform up to these expectations. The purpose also being to perpetuate community traditions and culture as far as possible and thus preserve the community identity.

TWENTIETH CENTURY DIASPORA

Initially, after the participation, the diaspora of Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) found its cause in entirely a different reason. In 1947 after the invasion of Kashmir by raiders across the border and subsequent accession of Jammu and Kashmir State to India, there was transfer of power from Maharaja to popular Government of National Conference led by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah who was a leader of the masses which essentially comprised of the majority Muslim community. Since KPs were in a minority they had to bear the brunt of injustice, very unfortunately, despite their full involvement and glorious contribution to the freedom movement of Kashmir. With the purpose of implementing Socialistic Pattern of Society, the measures of reservations for the so called downtrodden and the preferences for the majority became the guiding principles for the local Governments to achieve popularity and good will of the masses which comprised the vote bank. Unfortunately the Kashmiri Pandit community did not fall in this preferred criteria. Accordingly, merit became a secondary consideration and whether justified or not the Kashmiri Pandits became the victims of discrimination and such misrule of far reaching consequences. Despite their merit and capabilities they were deprived of their due rights on account of being a minority in the valley; they were denied their rightful share in the nominations for higher education, since at that time there were no professional colleges in Kashmir; they were also denied deserving jobs since the yardstick for employment was not essentially the merit or seniority but the community label one had tagged to one self. Land reforms, implemented for the first time anywhere in the country, enacting land to the tiller, added to this set back of KP community and therefore for all these collective reasons Kashmiri Pandits had to come out gradually in search of their livelihood, employment and opportunities for higher education. As a result, an ongoing process of migration of KPs to planes began which

process they accepted as a fait accompli. Large number of families came out of Kashmir and for one or the other reason they settled in the length and breadth of the country? though Delhi and other metropolitan cities in the North became their first choice. These migrants had their home and hearth in Kashmir where they used to go whenever an occasion arose essentially on the occurrence of deaths of their kith and kin, generally elderly, who used to remain in Kashmir, or on the occasion of the marriages and such festive occasions in the family. This diaspora was, therefore, different from the earlier ones which because of difficult conditions of communication, transportation and absolutely hostile atmosphere were irreversible migrations forcing almost absolute isolation from those relations left behind in the valley. Such an inevitable diaspora of this type continued on this pattern till 1989-90 when the militancy in Kashmir took a very violent shape and Kashmiri Pandits had to become displaced internally almost en-masse as refugees in their own country. In a nutshell the twentieth century diaspora of Kashmiri Pandits from their motherland was the result of they being discriminated and politically deprived as a minority, and, secondly, towards the end decade of the millennium, they being terrorised to abandon their centuries' old hearths and homes in their motherland on account of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism unleashed by the neighbouring Islamic country as a proxy war against India.

FORMATION OF AIKS

Kashmiri Pandits settled outside the state or within it formed their community associations essentially for social as also for political reasons. This led to the formation of various Kashmiri Pandit organizations in various parts of the country and abroad, each having its own objectives and priorities. However, in general, there was no cohesion amongst such numerous organizations, no common approach to solve their common problems particularly on social front. All the representative associations were feeling a vacuum in their relationship, a missing link in coordination with one another till the leadership role was taken by Kashmiri Samaj of Allahabad. They called, in the first stage, a get-together of U.P. Associations and then of All India organizations and in March 1980 the first All India Samaj meeting was held at Allahabad under the Presidentship of Mr. Justice P.N. Bakshi which led to the

formation of this federal organization. Within nine months' time the second Conference of AIKS was held at Calcutta on 27th and 28th December 1980 where more than fifteen Sabhas / Samities / Samajs of Kashmiri Pandits had a historic Conference and the draft Constitution of the AIKS was adopted. AIKS received at this stage the support of 22 KP organisations. Few members from Srinagar also participated in this Conference. The main emphasis was on creating a movement amongst Kashmiri Pandits for bringing about cohesiveness amongst themselves and breaking the barriers of distinction amongst the Kashmiri speaking and non-Kashmiri speaking Kashmiri Pandits on the premise that both were the sons of the same land. The objectives of the Samaj were essentially of a coordinating nature amongst the affiliated units and improved matters related to social aspects, to improving employment opportunities, matrimonial rapport, discouraging dowry curse which has been a serious issue, bringing out a newsletter/ publication of relevant information for circulation amongst member units, providing relief and medical assistance, propagating the Kashmiri language and preserving the Kashmiri Pandit culture and heritage. Annual get-togethers were held for reviewing the activities of the Samaj and developing a closer connection with our roots in Kashmir. In fact AIKS was purported to become the apex body of Kashmiri Pandits. Soon it had four organizations from Kashmir affiliated to it and comprised of a total affiliation of 38 units of which there were few from overseas also. As regards its office it was initially decided to have a rotating one, at the place of its elected President. It was assumed that this would as well bring in some variety and also motivate the affiliated units to perform this responsibility with improved results. After Justice Bakshi, respectively Col. P.N. Kak, affectionately known as Papa (the then President of Calcutta Sabha), Dr. N. L. Zutshi (President of Bombay Pandit Sabha), Brig R.N. Madan, (President of Jaipur Sabha) became Presidents for a tenure of two years term each. Since Delhi is the main nerve centre of activities and because the complexion of KP problems took a different turn then, Delhi became the head quarter of AIKS as soon as Dr. Zutshi's tenure was over. Thereafter, respectively, Brig. R.N. Madan, Shri D.N. Munshi and Shri J.N. Kaul (President of Faridabad Samiti) operated from Delhi and performed commendably. Shri J.N. Kaul is presently the President of AIKS for the sixth year.

SABHAS, SAMAJ AND SAMMELAN

At the Jodhpur Conference in 1982 I had the opportunity of presenting a paper entitled, "Sabhas, Samaj and Sammelan" which was subsequently published in the Vitasta Annual 1983, and reproduced in the Martand, Srinagar in three installments on 2nd, 8th and 14th June, 1983. A clear line of demarcation in responsibilities and objectives was drawn between a Sabha/Samiti and the Samaj. Whilst the Sabha/Samiti or similar local affiliate was assumed to play the pertinent role as the representative organisation of KPs at a particular location, looking after the interests of community locally at that location, it was clearly assumed in this paper, that the main objective of the AIKS was to coordinate the activities of the local affiliates, initiate a common plan of action for our roots or for preserving the tradition, culture and heritage of our community and playing the role of an apex body with full responsibility and authority to take care of the common objectives of the community and coordinating the same through the affiliated units. The common community agenda could be the generation of funds, establishment of Trusts, Endowments, awards and recognitions for our community individuals for their excellent performances, creating educational institutions which would have as their essential objectives the preservation of Kashmiri Pandit culture, literature, heritage and Kashmiri language. It was also assigned to safeguard community assets and interests particularly in Kashmir. It was also assumed to create institutions for preserving our Vedic system of Karam-Kand and create awareness and respect and provide for prospective employment of our Gurujis. One of the important objectives considered for our apex body was to enable community windows to be opened to healthier trends and practices amongst other communities in India or abroad to encourage excellence, infuse newer trends, bring about social reforms and related enlightenments. To facilitate this coordination, an Annual Get-together of all the affiliated units was considered necessary as the "Sammelan" where all important matters which required general discussion and general approval of the affiliated units were discussed for implementation. In this proposal a clear demarcation was drawn between the objectives of a local unit and the apex body, AIKS, so that there was no overlapping of objectives. It extended further in detailing the role of AIKS as the

apex body and the respect and authority it required so as to function appropriately up to its assigned objectives. Of the 10 objectives which AIKS was assigned the first and foremost objective read as follows." To coordinate activities of all Sabhas for common programmes of community welfare and to bring them closer to one another."

KP Exodus and AIKS

The traumatic exodus of KPs from Kashmir in 1989-90 and their ethnic cleansing from the valley brought about an added responsibility on AIKS suddenly and therefore the priorities of its agenda shifted to the relief and rehabilitation of the uprooted brethren from the valley. Though ten years have passed, this problem is still as critical and serious and continues to remain unresolved because of its very difficult and chaotic prognosis. However, AIKS has emerged as a very important player to avert demoralisation of the suffering brethren and in providing possible relief and help in refugee camps. In this connection the Jaipur Convention held in 1991 was a milestone in the history of AIKS. Pt. Dwarkanath Munshi was unanimously elected as the President of AIKS and a line of action was drawn. To bring awareness of Kashmiri Pandit problem, an Advisory Committee of well known Kashmiri Pandit authorities was formed so that with their advice and help Governmental, national and international assistance was received to solve the problems of rehabilitation of uprooted KPs from the valley. AIKS Trust was formed as an independent arm of the AIKS and funds were collected for extending relief to the displaced victims and providing financial resource for various action plans that AIKS considered purposeful for mitigating the sufferings of the victimised brethren. To bring about unity amongst various frontal organizations at Jammu, a Migrant Action Committee was formed with (late) Mr. M.L. Aima as its President and this Committee worked very dedicatedly under the leadership of Shri Munshi to create a joint front (AIKS-MAC) for solving the day to day problems that were being faced by the migrants in Camps at Jammu and Udhampur. A *Mahasammelan* of all the units was proposed to be held which, however, could not be organized on the scale as originally conceived. Further, with the assistance of Shri J.N. Kaul who was then the President of Faridabad Samiti and President of S.O.S., a Computer Training

Centre was established at Faridabad which has been providing training to displaced youth from the camps free of cost and has also succeeded in providing employment to the trainees who have been trained at this centre. This has been one of the greatest achievements of AIKS and this activity is successfully being continued under the leadership of Shri J.N. Kaul. The publication of AIKS, *Naad*, was started and from a News Letter it has now developed into a recognised community journal; this is being edited by Shri Omkar Kachru. In 1994 Shri J.N. Kaul took over as the President of AIKS and with his personal recognitions and dedicated efforts, AIKS has further received impetus and financial strength to continue with the ongoing projects of AIKS whether in camps or at Faridabad Computer Centre or at its Head Quarter at Delhi related to KP rehabilitation issues.

Present Objectives of AIKS

In order to discuss the present performance of AIKS and suggest improvements, it is necessary to consider firstly the present objectives of the AIKS which are as follows :

(a) To provide relief, including educational, medical facilities to the poor and to carry on their activities of general public utility.

(b) To promote educational and social activities, national integration, culture, economic well-being, spiritual integration, and welfare of the people.

(c) To work for various public charitable objects.

(d) To carry on other activities such as publication of journals etc. in furtherance of the activities of the Samaj.

(e) to guide, coordinate and monitor the various activities of unit members.

(Reproduced, verbatim, from NAAD, Vol. 7, No. 10, 1997 with editorial corrections.)

The above objectives of AIKS, which are followed currently, need a through examination for the functioning of AIKS as the apex body of Kashmiri Pandit organizations. The fundamental questions which arise are as follows :

1. Why the objectives are generalised and not specifically attributed to Kashmiri Pandits and their unit organisations?
2. In which respect these objectives are different from those of any other unit not responsible and accountable as the apex body of KP organizations? Some of the affiliates may be performing more important objectives pertaining to KPs.
3. The only differentiating function of AIKS is to coordinate the affiliated units and provide them guidance for community action plans. Why this objective is not the first priority of AIKS, the apex body?

Discussion

The objectives of an organization are supposedly based on logic and one would not oversimplify the rationale of above objectives as assumed presently by our apex body. However, it is apparent that we still feel desirable to only imply Kashmiri Pandit connection and not to highlight it. In his Presidential Address in the 1st Annual meeting of AIKS held at Calcutta, Justice Bakshi pointed out this weakness of Kashmiri Pandits and preferred to be "blunt" about this. Objectives define, determine and direct the subsequent activities of an organization and therefore, it is high time our AIKS restructures its objectives and priorities to suit those of an apex body of Kashmiri Pandits. Whatever AIKS is presently doing is more or less the same what an affiliated unit may be doing. But AIKS was formed as the apex body of KP organizations and therefore its prime role should be that of a coordinator or initiator of action-plans of common interest of all the affiliated units. Whilst delegating the action on various agenda to its frontal or specialist units it should monitor the performance on common agenda and help in solving the difficulties which the units may be facing and create resources and infrastructure for member units to facilitate action on the common and priority agenda for the survival and advancement of the community as a whole. That such a performance is not an easy job is being recognised whilst drawing attention to this, but functionally that is what is expected of an apex body. The functions of AIKS require to be divided into (i) Political, (ii) Social, (iii) Cultural, (iv) Financial and (v) Miscellaneous Action plans. There should not be many agenda items under these heads; just one item of highest common interest

and priority to the community in each should be taken up by AIKS for its implementation. The action on these agenda items will be carried out along with the help of concerned frontal affiliated units based in appropriate locations and having necessary capabilities to perform as Action Leaders. A procedure requires to be worked out so that involvement of all the affiliated units is achieved for the implementation of these few but essential items of agenda of AIKS which should be of common interest to the KP community. The apex body has to work out measures by which duplication of the same activity is minimised, as far as possible, and maximum attention is given to achieving quality of performance and effective implementation. How all this can be achieved requires involvement of all the affiliated units no matter where it is situated. This requires intensive discussions to enable such a thing practically happening. It is the function of apex body to organize the discussions, restricting its emphasis to only few issues. It is repeated that implementation of such action plans is an uphill task but that is what is expected of an apex body. Our community requires to change and develop leaders and that is the role which our apex body has to perform.

CONCLUSION

AIKS is the Apex Body of KP organizations spread over globally. There is a need for functional restructuring of AIKS for which its present objectives require to be looked into so that it performs up to the expectations for which this organization was formed. Its main role is that of a cohesive, coordinating apex body and for this purpose it has to work out new ideas and action plans. The organizational concept of the apex body is to be well identified and appropriately supported by authority and resources. Then only can AIKS succeed in solving our fundamental problems like rehabilitation of our uprooted brethren, developing a working script for our mother tongue and preserving our identity. AIKS represents a great movement of Kashmiri Pandit 20th century diaspora; but it has still to gain momentum to perform up to the objectives it was formed and to the responsibilities it has acquired, being the apex body of Kashmiri Pandits scattered globally. Action on this proposal will be a befitting homage to Shri Kashyap Bandhu to whom this chapter is dedicated whilst observing his birth centenary in year 1999.

and solemnly by the community in each should be taken up by AIKS for its implementation. The action on these agenda items will be carried out along with the help of concerned /nodal affiliated units based in appropriate localities and having necessary capabilities to perform as Action Centres. A procedure requires to be worked out so that involvement of all the affiliated units is achieved for the implementation of these few but essential items of agenda of AIKS which should be of common interest to the KP community. The apex body has to work out measures by which duplication of the same activity is minimised, as far as possible, and maximum attention is given to achieving quality of performance and effective implementation. How all this can be achieved requires involvement of all the affiliated units no matter where it is situated. This requires innovative discussions to enable such a thing practically happening. It is the function of apex body to organise the discussions, restricting its emphasis to only few items. It is conceded that implementation of such action plans is an uphill task but that is what is expected of an apex body. The community requires to change and develop leaders and that is the role which our apex body has to perform.

CONCLUSION

AIKS is the Apex Body of KP organizations spread over globally. There is a need for functional restructuring of AIKS for which its present objectives require to be looked into so that it performs up to the expectations for which the organization was formed. Its main role is that of a cohesive coordinating apex body and for this purpose it has to evolve new ideas and action plans. The organizational concept of the apex body is to be well identified and appropriately supported by authority and resources. This is how an AIKS can seek to solve our fundamental problems like rehabilitation of our uprooted brethren, developing a working script for our ancient tongue and preserving our identity. AIKS represents a great movement of Kashmiri Pandit 20th century diaspora, but it has still to gain momentum to measure up to the objectives it was formed for. It has great abilities in it. AIKS being the apex body of Kashmiri Pandits scattered globally, I am sure, we all are proud of it and its activities and our vision, our dreams, and hope would rest in this body as long as Kashmiri Pandit community exists.

CHAPTER 19

Some Cultural Imperatives for the Kashmiri Pandit Diaspora

Dr. S.S. Toshkhani

Kashmiri Pandits appear to have been caught in a time-warp. Even as they have stepped into the 21st century with their forward looking attitude, they are struggling to come out of the night that descended on them with the advent of Islam in Kashmir. It is a night that seems to have stretched into eternity with the ghost of Sikandar Butshikan coming to haunt them from time to time, assuming different forms to generate new fears in their minds. Their recent exodus – the worst in their history – proves how justified their fears have been.

What happens to uprooted people is that they tend to live in the past, for it is the past that defines them and tells them who they are – the present being too dreadful to face and the future too uncertain. To Kashmiri Pandits, however, even this shelter is not available as the last 600 years are etched on their racial memory as the scar of a deep wound. And though they remained creative and intellectually active in spite of the holocausts, genocidal attacks and programs that they have undergone during this 600-year long nightmare, they had already touched the peaks of their glory much earlier. Unfortunately that glorious stretch of their cultural past has been forgotten by most Kashmiri Pandits, a thick fog of amnesia clouding their vision. The fact that much that is best in Indian tradition of art and culture bears a stamp of Kashmiri Hindu genius

* An eminent scholar of Kashmiri Literature and History.

remains at the most a hazy notion on the periphery of their mental attention. In the perspective of the present situation, however, when the Pandits have lost their land that gave them a sense of identity, recognition of historical continuities and discontinuities has assumed a great importance. What was it in us that ceased to be after Islam became a dominant force in Kashmir and what continued thereafter is vital for us to determine, for then alone shall we be able to understand and assess how Islamic rule stunted the growth of indigenous culture and in what ways was it a factor in the mutation of the original Kashmiri personality. And the study of the 600 years of this domination, which directly led to the shrinking of the political and cultural space occupied by the Pandits, becomes extremely urgent. If the Pandits want to look at the future with a new sense of self-confidence and unencumbered freedom, the first thing they shall have to do is to lay the ghost of Sikandar Butshikan to rest forever.

As things stand today, the lines that distinguish them from Kashmiri Muslims are very few and very blurred. As a distinguished Kashmiri Pandit put it bluntly some years back, we have become "Muslim Brahmins". The truth of this is not difficult to see. Pandits today have left, for example, with no music of their own (except *henze*) no dance, no theatre, no traditional arts and not even a costume which they can call really their own. Even their language has lost its original purity. A case of syncretic culture? No. It is a case of cultural vacuum in which they are floating at present. And for this they alone are not to blame.

Wasn't it Budshah, the supposed hero of Kashmiri secular tradition, who began the process which eventually turned Kashmir into a West Asian cultural colony? It was he who brought hundreds of theologians, artisans, musicians and others from West Asia, as well as Central Asia, and settled them in Kashmir giving them all the royal patronage. He seemed to have no consideration for the devastating effect it had on indigenous artistic and cultural traditions. The *ud* and the *rabab* came with a host of other musical instruments, relegating the *muruj*, the *mridang, patah, veena* and *flute* to the realm of forgotten things; the Hafizas occupied the dancing floors which were earlier brought to life by the nimble-footed local dancers displaying the charm of fortynine emotions.

And more than everything else, Persian was made the court language, stopping the development of the Kashmiri language in its tracks at a time when it was emerging from the Prakrit-Apabhramsha stage to assume the form of a distinct modern Indo-Aryan language. Needless to say Kashmiri never recovered from the setback. With the arrival of Persian artisans, indigenous crafts suffered an unnatural death. Painters and sculptors started migrating to neighbouring princedoms for lack of patronage. The Sharada script, which was holding its sway all along the Himalayan belt from Himachal princedoms in the east to Ghazni in the west, began to count its days. (Incidentally Budshah's ancestor who founded the dynasty and captured the throne of Kashmir by guile was from Swat.)

Slowly the channels of indigenous creativity got choked. When the Mughals displaced the Sultans from power, Yusuf Shah Chak was having his fling with Zooni, who later became Habba Khatoon, to the beats of a hybrid Iranian-Kashmiri music. And when the Afghans overran the valley, almost all vestiges of original Kashmiri culture were done away with. Somewhere in the process the *pheran* in its present form was smuggled in from some Arab land. Along with it came the *tumbaknari* from Morocco and became an essential feature of Kashmiri folk music. The Sanskrit meters and the lilting cadences of early Kashmiri lyrics appearing in the "Banasur Katha" and "Sukha Dukha Charit", as well as the "Vaak", lost ground to Ghazals and Masnavis with borrowed West Asian imagery and difficult Turanian and Persian *bahars*. The Afghans completed this cultural colonization with the introduction of gay culture represented by the 'Bachaas' or boy dancers of the "Bacha Nagma", and this came to be celebrated as the most representative Kashmiri dance form.

With more than ninety per cent of the population becoming Muslim, there was no room left for discomfort over the total transformation of the Kashmiri society. The infidels had been converted or dumped alive in bags in the Dal lake whose embankments were built with the numerous books they had written during the centuries past. The Sword of Islam had completely triumphed in the land of old Kashyapa! Since then every account of Kashmiri life has become Muslim-centric, as if the Pandits never existed.

But how did all this come about? How did the population of Hindus continue to dwindle in numbers till they were reduced from an overwhelming majority to an infinitesimal minority? How could one Rinchen or one Shahmir create an upheaval that culminated in the original inhabitants of the place being booted out of their millennia old homeland almost to the last man? These are the moot questions that require a serious probe so that the Kashmiri Pandits could at last learn from history. There surely must have been some kind of flaw in their basic character which resulted in their undoing. This flaw has to be pinpointed. The irony is that they even now take an escape route and contribute to patent myths about Islamization of Kashmir.

The first and perhaps the most malignant of these myths is that Islam was propagated in a peaceful manner in Kashmir. What is indeed amazing and ironical is that victims of some of the worst holocausts in world history, the Kashmiri Pandits, should testify that their decimation was of their own volition. Well, if your ancestors were convinced of the superiority of Islam without as much as an argument, then what is the point in complaining? But wait a while and take the trouble of going through Jonaraja's Rajatarangini and you will be astonished by the amazing similarities of what Pandits went through in the 14th century and the predicament they are facing now. Or better, turn the pages of the Baharistan-i-Shahi to have a glimpse of the terrible truth. The history of Kashmir, you will find, is dripping with the blood of its Hindus and Buddhists. You are sure to bump into apparitions of the world's worst bigots – Shahmir and Sikandar Butshikan, Haider Shah and Ali Shah, Fateh Shah and Shams-ud-Din Iraqi, Mir Muqueem Kanth and Musa Raina, Lal Shah Khatak and Mirza Haider Dughlat, Aurangzeb and the entire host of rapacious Afghan governors on its pages each with gory tales of their savagery to relate which will send a chill down your spine. Also read with it what Syed Mir Ali Hamadani, who with his long retenue of Islamic clerics scripted the victory of Islam over the infidels of Kashmir, has written in his book 'Zakhirat-ul-Mulk' and you will get the complete picture. Read the humiliating conditions that he had put before non-Muslims to be allowed to live under a Muslim ruler and you will forget all that talk about Islam's face having been more liberal and more humane in Kashmir than anywhere else in India. Read how he justifies as "halal" the

possession of lives of such non-Muslims as dare to disobey these conditions and refuse to be converted to Islam. Going even further, his son Syed Mir Mohammed Hamadani, had no compunction in calling for the use of brute force and compulsion to make Hindus of Kashmir accept Islam. If you still think that Sufi ideology brought about the transition to Islam in Kashmir, then you are inclined to believe the most hideous lie ever told.

As for Sheikh Nur-ud-Din and his order of Muslim Rishis, who are said to have "adopted the practices of Brahmans and Buddhists" to ensure continuity in Kashmiri culture and traditions, just a question or two. If religious tolerance and universal love was his creed, why did he go about, banner in hand, proselytizing people? How is it that almost all of his leading disciples were originally Hindus? And what were the means adopted to bring persons like Buma Sad – said to have been a great devotee of Shiva – into Islamic fold? The story given in the 'Nur Namahs' is too simplistic to be convincing. There are other cues that are available but nobody dares to refer to them.

Another myth that needs to be exploded is that Kashmir, remote and inaccessible as it has been, has had little to do with India and its culture; that its beliefs and traditions have all evolved in splendid isolation within the boundaries of its mountain walls. The design behind the orchestration of this falsehood is obviously mischievous. It has been used only to foster sentiments of separation. Just because Kashmir is perched high amidst the Himalayan ranges, it does not follow that it has remained shut off from the rest of India, nor that the umbilical chord that joined it with the mainland has been severed. It is the Himalayas where the ancient sages of India discovered some of the deepest secrets of life, which are enshrined in the holiest of Hindu texts. The fact is that Kashmir has been the craddle of Sanskrit learning for over two thousand years and the repository of some of the seminal ideas and concepts that have set into motion thinking processes throughout the country any have shaped the Indian mind. Scholars from different parts of India would come all the way to Kashmir for intellectual exchange, and Kashmir too on its part absorbed and assimilated influences in art, literature, philosophy, religion and other areas from different sources in India. Kashmiris drew liberally from the pan-Indian pool of motifs, myths, legends and

images, and at the same time greatly enriched Indian history and culture, art and aesthetics, philosophical thought and folklore quite out of proportion to their numbers.

If Kashmiri Hindus named their most sacred places after the famous pilgrimage centres of the country, it was not to create a parallel religious cosmology, but out of a deep sense of faith and reverence. And despite the invention of an imaginary Semitic tribe Kash which is supposed to have given its name to Kashmir like it did to Kashan and Kashgar (one wonders why if it was on a naming spree did it forget Kashi), Kashyapa Rishi, the great Pauranic patriarch and progenitor, remains central to Kashmir's creation myth from which it actually derived its name. Again, wasn't Kashmir the place which gave the world the gift of Mahayana Buddhism and launched missionaries from its soil to propagate it in different parts of the world?

Historically and culturally too Kashmir has always been a part of India, as pointed out by Hermann Goetz. Rajatarangini begins its account with the story of Queen Yashomati who was put on Kashmir's throne by none else than Krishna himself. And Shrinagar, the capital city was founded by Ashoka who made Kashmir a part of his Mauryan empire. Matrigupta was made a king of Kashmir on the recommendation of King Vikramadatya of Ujjain. There are many scholars, including Hindi dramatist Mohan Rakesh, who believe that Matrigupta and Kalidas were one and the same person. Why are these facts ignored by those who talk of the exclusiveness of Kashmir? It is unfortunate that many who are inclined to do so are from the Kashmiri Pandit community. Harping on what they call a composite Kashmiri culture, they even consider the Persian-West Asian implant to be the real thing, some taking pride is assuming the victor's identity. Had the present exodus not taken place, many of them would have fallen a prey to this syndrome. A good number of Pandits had started behaving, speaking, acting and dressing like their proselytized counterparts, some even adopting their pronunciation and accent.

Among diaspore Kashmiri Pandits there is no dearth of such persons who seek to flatter their ego by talking of Kashmiri exclusiveness under the cover name "Kashmiriat" – a very deceptive concept specially tailored to make Muslim separatism

look a little more respectable and acceptable. This is yet another myth which requires to be shattered before it further beguiles people. It is indeed amusing to see non-Kashmiris lending a halo to it, talking of "tolerance", "harmony" and "amity" as the features that define it. For them we would like to recommend a small dose of Kashmir's medieval history beginning with the time when political power passed into the hands of the Muslim Sultans.

As for the diaspore Pandits, it would be better if they could avoid falling into pitfalls of either naivety or ignorance. Learning to adjust with the realities of their post-exodus existence they have to decide whether they have to retain their distinct identity and traditions or merge into anonymity. Culture, we must understand, is something deeper than merely expressing preference for a particular cuisine. It involves a whole way of living and thinking. And going back to their cultural roots means for them restoration of their links with their Sanskritic traditions. They must go through the pages of the Nilamata Purana to know about the beauty of the way of life that was once theirs, a way of life attuned to nature with fairs and festivals and music and sports adding zing to life. They must know about the cerebral graces that a Pandit had to cultivate, about the spirituality that underlined oneness of existence and yet saw God in every manifestation of nature making them celebrate the birthdays of their rivers and springs, about the creative imagination that found fulfillment in the quest for artistic perfection. They have to make the Shiva Sutras and the "architectonic power and mystical profundity" of Shaiva thought, the great debates on the nature of aesthetic experience and its relation to aesthetic experience started by their great aesthetes whose work constitutes the bulk of Indian aesthetic theory, the exploits of a Kumarajiva or Gunavarnan who took Mahayana to the shores of China, Japan, Korea, Philippines and Indonesia and their great traditions in art and architecture an essential part of their mental make up.

There is a lot for the Kashmiri Pandits to feel proud of and to boost their self-esteem. Instead of going into depression over their present state, they should try to recreate their self-image that has taken a beating during the last few centuries. It is true that history has been most cruel to them but in spite of all odds, the Pandits have shown a resilience that has astounded the world

many times in the past. Falsifying all stereotyped notions about themselves, they should look at the future with a view to touching new horizons. They should focus on continuing their tradition of learning and academic excellence and step into a new world with hope in their eyes and confidence in their hearts.

Perhaps the Kashmiri diaspore has come to stay. At least there is no point for the Pandits in deluding themselves that they shall be able to return to a Kashmir that is nothing but an extension of fundamentalist Pakistan. But there is a Kashmir within us of all which he shall have to nurture as we need it to give a meaning to our lives. The time for self-recognition is ripe as it never was. Let us move past all the falsifications and distortions of our history orchestrated deliberately to malign and humiliate us. It is imperative that we break the silences imposed on us and come out with countermovements against all wild propaganda that seeks to mock us in the eyes of the world. We have to assert with all the power we can summon that the real cultural face of Kashmirs is ours and not of our tormentors.

Of late some noises are being made about the need to keep the Kashmiri language alive as a medium of oral transmission. While this is to be welcomed one should not shut one's eyes to the fact that this language has suffered greatly at the hands of those who are out to destroy its true character. A language that has descended straight from the Vedic speech, has been buried under massive interpolations of Persian and Arabic words. Though there is nothing that signals Kashmiriness more than the Kashmiri tongue, it has virtually become a dialect of Arabic and Persian with all its terminology borrowed wholesale form these languages. This is cultural subversion in its most devastating form, for disfiguring a language is disfiguring the identity that it embodies. It is unfortunate that those who have brought about this situation include many a so called scholar from the Kashmiri Pandit community. Now that the whole perspective of things has changed for us, we should draw a line and save Kashmiri from becoming a wooden and artificial language unable to form derivative and terms from its own stems and bases.

As for its script, the most unphoenetic alphabet has been officially thrust on Kashmiri, not for academic but for religious

and political reasons. Should we not gather courage and try to revive the indigenous Sharada script the way the Jews resurrected Hebrew after two thousand years of its remaining buried under sands of time?

"What if the heaven is lost, all is not lost", wrote the 17th century English poet John Milton in an entirely different context. But the line applies very much to us, Kashmiri Pandits, in our present state of dispersal and despondency. If we try to understand our history properly and learn all the necessary lessons from it, there is nothing that can hold us from regaining our old glory. Armed with a new vision, we can derive from the past new paradigms for the future.

PART - IV

PRESENTATION PAPERS : THE POLITICAL ASPECTS INVOLVED

CHAPTER 20

Return to Kashmir and re-establishing our Presence

*Dr. K.L. Chowdhury**

Two questions crop up in the mind before one discusses the modalities of our return to Kashmir. First, do we want to return? Second, should we return and if so when? They have to be addressed in utmost sincerity and seriousness otherwise we will be undertaking only a tiring and futile mental journey of return.

A Million-dollar Question

Do we want to return? Kashmiri Pandits are going through this agonizing conflict situation at present. On the one hand, the urge to return and reclaim all that has been cruelly and ruthlessly snatched from us is so strong. On the other, there is the haunting memory of persecution, suppression and conversions of centuries and the fresh memory of the gory details of religious hatred against our community, of kidnapping, torture and brutal killings; of death, destruction and desecration. The ongoing trauma of exile and the details that pour in of a total transformation of the socio-political and cultural milieu of the Valley are the most daunting factors against our urge to return and forbid us from any such rash venture. The fact that all we left behind has been vandalised and arsoned or annexed and occupied, going back even if ideal conditions were created for our return, would mean the tortuous process of reclaiming the original status of our properties and

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institutions and rebuilding the whole destroyed infrastructure. It also postulates rebuilding bridges with the alienated Muslim majority community and seeking afresh avenues for employment and means of survival.

Most of our community is not prepared for this herculean task for two reasons. One, that a state of complacency has set in and this is a very unfortunate trend of accepting the de-facto position of exile and the subhuman conditions in the refugee camps and the doles. The people, for no fault of theirs, have got used to an unabashed acceptance of wages without work and their vital energies are dissipated in sloganeering for certain allowances which are denied to them as migrants. With complacency has set in loth and sloth which leads to decay. This is a dangerous situation which negates our urge to return. The second argument against returning is that our boys and girls got a windfall in admissions to professional colleges in Maharashtra. I even found some parents wishing the *status-quo* to continue for some more years so that their wards also get a Maharashtra ticket. While there are no two opinions that new frontiers have opened up for many of our youth, haven't we in the process taken away the incentive for hard work and competition from them that so far served as a bulwark for our survival in the most oppressive and suppressive conditions? And how long do we expect the largesse from the benevolent Gods of Maharashtra? Once the boon is taken away - and given the present day political equations it may not be long before that happens – our youth will be left in the lurch as they will find themselves unprepared to face competitions at all India level.

This conflict situation may not stay long if we continue to remain in exile for another 10 or 15 years and a whole new generation will have taken birth and grown up to adulthood with an entirely new place attachment with no awareness and, therefore, no desire to reclaim the homeland which the elder generations who migrated in the wake of terrorism still retain.

Majority against Return

At the moment of this writing, therefore, the majority of us do not want to return and I don't blame anybody. And now the question arises as to whether we should return and when?

Yes, I feel we must return to the land of our birth and that of our ancestors. The urge for roots is one of the most instinctive urges in all living organisms and is fundamental to man's identity as an individual and as a member of the society and a citizen of a country. The genetic links of generations which have preceded you through ages, the emotional links to places of habitation, the religious and spiritual links to places of daily pilgrimage to temples and shrines where you and your ancestors have grown up and left footprints on sacred mother earth, are too strong to be sundered by human devices, however violent. Otherwise why should our ancestors have gone back even when we faced exodus six times in the past seven centuries? What is that deathless affinity and urge for roots except to realise your identity and your emotional, metaphysical and spiritual needs?

The argument that Pandits can and should live anywhere of their choosing in India and for that matter, in the world, is no doubt compelling given the fact that they have excelled everywhere they went, more so when the world has become a smaller place, a global village so to say. There is no doubt we have broken the parochial and regional confines and are tending to be citizens of the world. Yet, nobody can deny that we are not equal citizens everywhere. We are outsiders even in Indian States barring a few metropolitan cities. The sons of soil movements are fast gathering momentum everywhere in India. Even in the most progressive Western countries and even after having obtained citizenship of these counties, we meet discrimination at all levels. I agree that in our own Jammu and Kashmir state we faced the worst discrimination and were not even second class citizens, yet that is the only state we can call our own, our parent state, our homeland, to which we have full rights, the only place were we lived as a community – rural and urban – with people of all professions, callings and creeds; where we can live and survive as a vibrant community; where we can preserve our language, our culture, our customs and the purity of our race.

There are some well-meaning friends who feel that we should create Pandit cultural centres everywhere we colonize in India or abroad, raise modern temples of education and scientific learning and health-care and forget Kashmir which is fouled for ever and not worthy of habitation any more. I agree that nobody

stops us from creative and constructive pursuits wherever we strike new roots but given our small numbers and the diaspore, will it be possible to sustain for long as a community? No community can survive in islands scattered far and near. The more we disperse the more we mix and dilute and greater the weakening of cultural traditions and the erosion of our customs and values. Within two generation we loose our language, within three generations we loose the affinity for homeland, within four we loose the cultural identity and within five to six the linkage to Pandit heritage.

Another compelling reason why we should return is our commitment to our motherland. Imagine Kashmir, the land of Satisar, the abode of Hindu sages, savants and saints, where there is a reigning deity in almost every village, metamorphosed into a purely Islamic land whose history is being mutilated and re-written in Islamic tradition and where all vestiges of Hindu glory are being demolished and defaced. Imagine the Taliban hordes and other fundamentalist zealots taking over the place and building mosques and madrasas on the ruins of our sacred places of worship. This mother Kashmir is crying for salvation and redemption. Our Gods and deities are exhorting us to return and preserve their sancity and glory.

And yet another reason for us to return is the nationalistic duty we owe to India to retain Kashmir as a part and parcel of this country. Only the presence of Kashmiri Pandits, the original inhabitants of this land, can ensure the moral and psychological right of India to Kashmir as also the future of the secular and democratic structure of our Constitution. If Kashmir becomes purely Islamic, it will embolden the fundamentalists to pursue their Pan-Islamic agenda and carve out many Pakistans in India. For India the urgency to repatriate and resettle Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir cannot be greater than now.

Need for Political Identity

Having argued in favour of return, the question arises as to when and how. This is even more difficult to answer. The longer we stay away the dimmer will be the urge and the chances of return. Therefore, the question of return has to be taken on a war

footing. If we wait for militancy to die down completely and ideal conditions to obtain in the Valley, free of anti-Pandit sentiments and free of discrimination, we will be living in a fool's paradise. We have to seize the initiative even while the situation looks so desperate and hopeless. I strongly feel that a political identity is the prerequisite for our struggle to reclaim our roots; for keeping the community well-knit; for any progress in the retention of our language and its enrichment; for furtherance of our educational, artistic, scientific and cultural pursuits and for survival as a vibrant community. Politics is a tool for survival in this conflict ridden world. The smaller the community the larger the need for politics in keeping it from disintegrating. Let politics, therefore, not be a pariah as we have treated it so far to our great detriment. Even in exile it is only politicking for our rights that has made it possible for us to survive and sustain these 10 years with dignity.

Having studied and discussed in great detail with cross sections of intellectual and lay opinion, we have realised that the only way we can go back is by staking our claim for a homeland. I feel that the Margdarshan Resolution of Dec. 28, 1991 is a landmark in the history of Kashmiri Pandits. It has paved the way for the struggle for a homeland, which seems now the only road of return to Kashmir for Kashmiri Pandits and a strong argument with the Govt. of India against all the disinformation and the moral, diplomatic and political coercion vis-a-vis its claim to Kashmir. This also serves as the greatest buffer against the most vicious Autonomy juggernaut launched by the ruling National Conference Government in Jammu and Kashmir to pursue its nefarious secessionist agenda. In fact it paves the way for our own autonomy from the coercive and discriminative Muslim majority rule in Jammu and Kashmir. The only thing for us now is to create a fresh awareness in our community about the need to return and the need to carve out a homeland with Union Territory status in Kashmir. There has to be a concerted community-wide stir, everywhere in India and, with this single mission in hand, to project our claim at all fora and at all levels in the world and there is no reason why our efforts should not be crowned with glory.

[Courtesy : *Koshur Samachar,* June 2000]

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[illegible]

CHAPTER 21

Jammu and Kashmir State's Multicultural Heritage - A Case for Global Rescue Operation

B.L. Kaul (Chaman)

India was known as the 'golden sparrow' from the early days of history. All the Middle East, European and Asian countries were eager to develop trade relations with it by land and sea. The search for a sea route from western Europe to India led to the discovery of the American continent. All great religions of the world are found in India. While Hinduism and Buddhism originated here, Islam and Christianity also are well represented. Indian Muslims are the second largest community in the world. India gave shelter to various other communities of the adjoining countries, such as Jews, Bodhs, Parsis, Bohras, Bahais, etc., who were thrown out from their places of origin. It can be said that India is a miniature world. Similarly, it can also be stated that in Jammu and Kahsmir followers of all the major religions are well represented and living peacefully. For quite some time till the Muslim onslaught during the fourteenth century, all the communities lived in harmony. Therefore, we could say that India is a miniature world and Kashmir is miniature India.

It is said that Noah's Arc was anchored at the highest mount of Kashmir (Mahadev Peak). It is also said that saints, who prophesied about the birth of Jesus Christ, were from Kashmir and, after the resurrection, Christ appeared in Kashmir and lived

there for some time. There is a tomb at Rosabal at Srinagar, where he has been laid to rest.

A RICH RELIGIO-CULTURAL HERITAGE

In Jammu and Kashmir, it is believed that all the peaks of the Shivalik range are abodes of gods and goddesses. In this area, we have the history of 'pit and cave dwellers' to modern civilization. There are many sacred spots where people from all over India come to have *darshans* and perform worship according to their faith. Kashmir is known as Shardapeeth and when Adishankaracharya visited the Valley, he was so much impressed that he named one of his maths at Shringeri in the South as the 'Shardapeeth'. The main temple of Shardapeeth is now in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on a hilltop on the banks of the Kishenganga.

The Sri Amarnath cave where thousands of people visit to have *darshan* of Lord Shiva was discovered by a Muslim, Malik by name, whose family now gets one-third of the cash offerings at the temple and also undertakes the repair of the approach road to the cave. Every peak in Jammu and Kashmir is named after gods and goddesses who are worshipped from time to time all round the year. For instance, there are peaks named Harshar, Sarshar, Mahadev and Shankaracharya in Kashmir and in Jammu we have Sarthal (Kishtwar), Mount Kailash (Bhadrawah), Vaishnodevi (Katra), Sudhmahadev (Sakhrala), Purmandal, Uttaravahini, Ranbireswar, Raghunath. The pilgrims to Sri Amarnath and Vaishnodevi outnumber the pilgrims who visit holy Kaaba in Mecca or the Vatican in Rome.

The rise of Buddhism in the north and northwestern areas of the state gave Kashmir a pivotal importance as a base for the spread of Mahayana Buddhism. Kashmiri Pandits well versed in Hinduism turned Bhikshus and went to Tibet, China, Kabul, Kandhar etc., preaching Mahayana Buddhism. In Kashmir Valley itself, monks could be seen meditating in forests and it was during King Ashoka's time that thousands of monks reached Kundalyan near Srinagar from all over India where the fourth Buddhist Council was held. The effect of environment, the mode of worship and religious practices reached their culmination when Mahayana School of Buddhism was adopted by the Brahmins making Gautama Buddha the ninth avatar of Lord Vishnu.

Various schools of Hindu philosophy, mainly Shaivism, influenced the whole of India, especially the north and northwest part of it. Heun Tsong lived in India for over 24 years from 631 AD to learn shastras and Sutras. He speaks of the enormous intellectual activity with which over 100 centres of residential learning, with 10,000 scholars joined both for intellectual pursuits and commercial activities. The area had become cosmopolitan with the inflow of world travellers, visitors, writers, scholars and thinkers. The Zojila route led to Tibet and Gilgit. With Buddhists living in the entire northwestern India, especially in Kashmir, the impact of architecture and sculpture could be felt prominently. Artisans could be seen moving about not in the Valley alone but also on its borders from where trade was carried on during this period. Building activity was also at its peak in the whole area. Thousands of dwelling houses, Viharas and Stupas were seen coming up. Bernier, who visited this area, states as early as in 1665: "In truth the kingdom surpassed in beauty all that my wildest imagination had even expected". It is in such places that God lives. It was here that Adishankaracharya was blessed by Maa Sharda with her *Darshans*.

The Heaven on Earth

Kashmir was rightly described as "Heaven on the Earth" not only by travellers and visitors but also by kings, religious personalities, lovers of nature, poets and the common man. While moving through Ladakh, a person feels as if he is moving in a different world, a desert quiet and calm, sky and earth meeting and stars twinkling brightly against the clear blue sky. One feels as if in heaven, ideal for meditation and prayer. The Buddhists in this area are seen ever in a prayerful mood not indulging in much of the superficial or exhibitionist activities. Their stupas and places of worship are full of young and old in natural human environments and the surroundings are decorated with paintings and architectural drawings of Boddhistava. The history of Buddhism in Ladakh goes back to the Kushan period and bears testimony to direct links with Kashmir's Gandhar style of art. The Khaosti and Brahmi inscriptions in Drass and Khalsi have strengthened the belief that, among other Himalyan states, Ladakh has been the cultural satellite of mainland India from the time of the Kushanas. The ancient murals in Alchi Ladakh, drawn by Kashmiri artists, are world famous.

Early Art Traditions

On the basis of the figures inscribed on the tiles of Harvan near Srinagar, dated Circa third of fifth Century AD, inferences can be drawn about the early art traditions of the Valley. More important are the painted representations of the Buddhist subjects of the book covers of the Gilgit-manuscripts suggesting the style of paintings of the region of Kashmir. A distinct impact of the developed sculptural art of the Valley is discernible in the rock sculpture of Mulbek and elsewhere in Ladakh and in some of the Ladakhi Buddhist bronzes. After the Muslim invaders disturbed the spiritual and peaceful life of Kashmir, Ladakhis were cut off temporarily from Kashmir and developed as part of a separate kingdom. The Ladakh monasteries have played an important role in physical and spiritual growth of Buddhism. It has not only been the centre of learning for Buddhist philosophy, history, literature and language but also a sanctuary for Buddhist paintings, printing and sculpture. The study of five major Buddhist sciences, language, logic, metaphysics, medicine and art became courses of study in monasteries. This land of Himalayan routes across the Pamir, Aksaichin and Karakoram range of Russia, Tibet and China, caravans after caravans kept alive travel, trade and culture, from Misgar to Gilgit and Leh to Sinkiang. The main routes of culture and commercial intercourse between India and Central Asia during the ancient times passed through the beautiful valley of Kashmir and was known as the Silk Route. The diffusion of mainly three religio-cultural streams – Hindu, Buddhist (Tibetomongoloids) and Muslims – harmonized into a faith in common ideals.

The Ladakhi Culture

In Ladakh, the festivals kept the spirit of people alive. While these had, no doubt, a religious base, yet these festivals depicted life in its various aspects. In Ladakh, with its bleak and dry environment, the Lama priests presented imaginary creations with life, death, suffering and salvation; Good and Evil figured in their dance and drama. A regular calendar of festivals began with the new year at Mela-Losar, Mela-Chimmery-Gompa, Mela-Sheh-Shinba and celebrated Mela-Hemis-Gompa. These festivals flavoured life with mobility, music, dance, worship and contacts. In bitter cold, festivals are held and *chhung*, a local liquor, is used to warm up the body for dance and drama. Spring and autumn

have their respective festivals, when processions are taken out and masked dances showing the defeat of the Devil performed. Effigies are burnt, prayers offered and monasteries sanctified with some mysterious practices known only to the Lama priests.

Influence of Shaivism

In the outer hill regions of Jammu, there are a good number of temples and shrines. Here also festivals form an important part of life. In olden times, chiefs and landlords financed the celebrations and the people from surrounding hills assembled to offer prayers and benefited from the festival market displays. With the opening of new roads, minor festivals merged into bigger ones providing a market place for weeks on end. The spread of Buddhism in Kashmir may have weakened the rigidity of rituals but the philosophy of Nirvana could not shatter the strength of ideals explained by Upanishadas. The influence exerted by a harmonious landscape on the new faith of Islam, which had lost much of its aggressive character till it reached the hills of Himalayas, brought about a fusion in the quest of truth, where the mosque and the temple faded before the real quest of Sufi mystics, seen in common places of worship at the Shah-Hamdan, Hari Parbat, Tsrar and other holy places in Kashmir. An indigenous system of philosophy of Kashmir, known as the doctrine of recognition, was developed. Monastic Shaiva philosophy, evolved in the Valley, in its beautiful, charming and enchanting environment, inspired thinkers to create and evolve an interesting and alternative philosophy. Dryness of philosophy changed into sweetness in Kashmir. This inspired love and affection in human hearts. The philosophers of this land, unlike those in other parts of the world, discarded all painful torturing methods of seeking God and advocated the blissful methods of Rajyoga, based on extreme love and devotion for the ultimate reality.

The natural beauty of Kashmir has been inspiring poetry even in philosophers and in the philosophy expressed by them through the medium of logic. Kashmir Shaivism has been the result of infinitive relations brought about by an intensive meditation practised by aspirants free from all physical and mental cares. Most of these aspirants have been ancient Kashmiris, who were protected from invaders by the high mountain walls by having

stored all the necessities of life in their secluded homes for the long winter months. Such a conducive environment induced the deepest philosophic insight possessed by philosophers like Somananda, Utpaldeva and Abhinav Gupta. The Shaivites of Kashmir did not advocate path of *Sanyas* but lived the life of happy and contented householders, pursuing both worldly and spiritual aims of life side by side.

DYNAMIC SOCIAL LIFE

The common people of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have been immensely influenced by beauty that lies hidden in the hills, forests and mountains. The cultural landscape of this area had an interesting feature of festival bazaars, annual fairs and pilgrim journeys, representing a dynamic aspect of rural areas. Pilgrimages to Sri Amarnath, to Harmukat Ganga, the ceremonies for the dead at Mattan and monthly prayers at Khir Bhawani, Friday prayers at Tsrar and Hazratbal, the festivals at Ladakh, pilgrimage to Vaishnodevi in Jammu are some of the instances to show the dynamic spirit of the social life in the state. Last but not the least was the contribution of sturdy Sikhs, who wherever they settled, a seat of worship-Gurdwara – became the centre for their religious and social activities. Their musical mode of worship attracted Hindus also. Gurdwara Chhatti Padshahi near Kathi Darwaza of Hari Parbat Fort, is the centre of Shabad Kirtan on all Sundays, Guru Purb and other holidays, when a good number of Sikhs and Hindus come barefooted from far off distances in early morning and go back to their places after taking *prasad* in the afternoon. It was for Kashmiri Pandits that Guru Teg Bahadur Ji sacrificed his life to prevent their annihilation at the hands of Aurangzeb, who was bent upon exterminating the Hindu community. This is, perhaps, the only example in the world, where a saint offered his head for the cause of humanity. But in spite of his exemplary sacrifice, Aurangzeb did not stop at that but brutally murdered members of the community and did not spare even saints and sages of his own community at that time. The result was that the Mughal dynasty came to an abrupt end. As a reaction to the massacre of Hindus in Kashmir, Sikhs took revenge and it was Hari Singh Nalwa, who pushed all Afghan and other Muslim invaders beyond Khyber Pass. It was for a long time that people from the North-East dared not to attack and suppress the Indian

community. Similarly, in North India, it was Zoravar Singh, who also taught invaders a lesson and vanquished them in their own areas. In this process the Sikhs dominated North India and prevented outside attacks till the advent of the Britishers.

Large towns like Anantnag, Baramulla, Handwara, Sopore, Doda, Bhadrwah, Kishtwar, Riyasi, Poonch, Rajouri, Leh and Gilgit not only strengthened the ribs of communication but also expanded travel, trade and tourism. Many villages became glorified with religious centres. Recent history has shown that by and large, the resolve to usher in a democratic and secular way of life for cultural development is now a settled fact.

Home of Learning

Grierson says : "For upward of 2,000 years, Kashmir has been the home of Sanskrit learning and from this small valley have been issued the masterpieces of history, poetry, romance, fable and philosophy. For centuries, Kashmir was the home of greatest scholars". According to Lawrence, "The Valley of Kashmir is the holy land of Hindus and I have rarely been in a village which cannot show some relic of antiquity". It is only during the 14th century that dark clouds gathered on the horizon of Kashmir with the invasion of Pathans, on the gentle people of Kashmir, mostly Brahmins, engaged in the pursuit of mind and spirit.

Colourful Seasons

Kashmir is known as the heaven on Earth. There are distinct seasons ever changing and having their own colour. In spring, almond blossoms impart a scent to the air and multicoloured flowers and the songs of birds impart life and joy to the landscape. With the appraoching summer, paddy fields and luscious green gardens are seen heading towards the ripening of cereals and fruits which is followed by a golden autumn and one can see red leaves of the chinars all over the landscape. Then comes the winter with its heavy snowfall which buries everything under its white heavy cover. These changing moods of nature instill feelings of renunciation of not the world but of worldliness, not of actions but desires, so aptly observed by several saint poets of Kashmir.

Throughout history, Kashmir, Jammu, Gilgit and Ladakh have had a harmonious intercourse across its borders, with China,

Russia and Turkistan on the north and China and Tibet on the east. However, economic self-sufficiency resulted in contentment providing sufficient scope for intellectual activity. It was natural that art and skill now seen in exquisite designs of art and craft attained excellence in printing, leather, *nara* making, wooden implements, coarse woollen blankets, clothes, walnut wood goods, gabbas and other woollen clothing, building stones, paper machie, silverware, imitation jewellery, embroidery, brass utensils, namdas, pashmina wool, garments and the like. The village has thus been an important unit of economic and social activity and importance was given to the villagers close to the administrative centres where the surrounding area formed the field of the service. Kashmir has a special environment and natural setting for growth of fruit trees such as apple, pear, plums, almonds and the world-renowned saffron. Perhaps this is the only place in the world where nature has expressed itself in fullest measure and in a striking way thus making everything in Kashmir peculiar and different in beauty, colour and taste from the rest of the world. Mughal kings used to spend their summer in Kashmir making it the summer capital of India. There were more than 80 beautiful pleasure gardens all around Dal Lake, Manasbal Lake and Wular Lake. Even now many places in Kashmir can be located by the name of the gardens.

Composite Culture

Kashmiris share a common folklore and composite culture. Besides having common food habits, common dress and common folk, they also have several common places of adoration. Lal Ded and Nund rishi are pillars of Rishi cult and both these spiritual luminaries are held in high esteem by all sections of Kashmiri society. This mystic school is the confluence of all that is best in Hinduism. Islam and Buddhism, where Nund Rishi is Alamdar-e-Kashmir to Muslims, Hindus call him Sahaj Anand, that is self-born bliss. People of all faiths throng his shrine and pay their homage to the great saint. They ask for their wishes to be fulfilled. Nund Rishi was the embodiment of piety, compassion, non-violence and equality of mankind. In him two famous Vedic rishi schools form one whole. He lived on dry vegetables and, during the last phase of life, sustained on water alone. His disciples lived a life of celibacy, non-violence and non-injury. They worked for the welfare of common man and are considered to be the most

respectable people of the society. There are good number of Rishi shrines, not only in Kashmir but also in Kishtwar in Jammu.

The Rishi style of architecture is a feat of woodwork of a Kashmiri carpenter. This style is known as Eastern Java-type Pagoda and Parihaspura style in the history of architecture. This Buddhist monastery style was later on adopted for temples and now is a living style in the form of revered rishi shrine of Kashmir. Cooking of meat is prohibited around the shrines of Rishi Sahib (Rishi Mol) in Anantnag, Batmalloo in Srinagar and Parnain in Baramulla. Mystic poetry is a precious part of Kashmir literature. It is a blend of Vedanta, Trika and Islamic mysticism. Sufi poetry, though a realm of Muslim mystics, has used terminology of Hindu Shastras in such a masterly style that a particular portion of this literature is known as Shastra. While the first Bhajan in Kashmiri has been written by a Muslim poet Shah Gafur, it is said that Hindu poets such as Anand Ram and Sat Ram have composed Naats of merit.

All Kashmiris share a common treasure of folk songs which are recited and sung on appropriate occasions. The cardle songs, pastoral songs, songs of the season's dance, nursery rhymes and other folk songs are the collective expressions of their feelings. The entire terminology of marriage in Hindus and Muslims is identical, except the terms lagan and Nikah. Chhakri, Rouf and Hikat enhance the grace in the festivity of every marriage and other social festivity.

During the early part of this century, Christian missionaries introduced modern type of education along with the allopathic treatment of diseases in Kashmir. Small hospitals were opened in Srinagar, Baramulla, etc., which helped in checking many epidemics like cholera. Maharaja Hari Singh had introduced compulsory education for all with free supply of books and other required things. Free education for boys and girls was introduced up to the college level for the poor sections of society.

Tribal Invasion

Legislative reforms, higher education and voting rights were introduced much before the independence of India. Unluckily, at the time of partition of the country, invaders from

Pakistan started burning of houses, killing ruthlessly men and women of all castes and creeds, plundering and destroying temples and other places of worship. They organised raids on treasuries, hospitals, schools, marketplaces and houses of common men shedding blood all around. It was in this process that many of these Christian hospitals, schools and churches were destroyed. Many nurses were brutally raped and murdered. Thereafter, Christian missionaries were not enthusiastic to reorganise and reestablish these institutions in this area.

TALES OF BRUTAL ATROCITIES

For the past 600 years or so, people of Kashmir, mostly Hindus or Buddhists, were mercilessly butchered by all the invaders from northwestern side of India. There was a time when only 11 families of Pandits were left in Kashmir after they passed their days incognito in distant villages. Any Hindu who did not agree to conversion to Muslim faith was cut down to pieces. There is a big island in Dal Lake which has come up where the ashes of sacred threads and murdered Hindus were thrown in and this place is known as Bat-Mazar (graveyard of Kashmiri Hindus). The womenfolk of these Hindus were paraded naked so as to humiliate them while crying and weeping on the dead bodies of their menfolk. Perhaps there is no such example of brutal atrocities committed on any community anywhere in the world during these last 600 years. It was only during the Dogra reign that some of these temples and places of pilgrimage were restored and Kashmiri Hindus started living peacefully to some esxtent. In August 1947 Pakistani forces and Afghan terrorists started repeating the atrocities that their forefathers had committed in this area. Even now to this day, these mercenaries from so-called Muslim countries have not only butchered non-Muslims but they have not spared men and women of their own faith whom they profess to be the only true followers of their Islamic God.

Declare Kashmir as World Heritage

It is high time that the countries which have been rendering help by way of selling arms and ammunition and other armaments of warfare to Pakistan, refrain themselves from doing so. They should understand that these actions and other forms of help to such countries will boomerang on them as well because in reality

these fanatics have no religion but only the religion of destruction and death. The UN should also take a stand with regard to Jammu and Kashmir and declare it as world heritage area. Followers of all religions are inhabiting this part of India which was once considered to be the paradise on earth. Let them restore this status back to the State which Nature had bestowed on it for thousands of centuries, till human hand destroyed it in recent times.

Though it is not possible to assess the harm and damage done by mercenaries from many Muslim countries, including Pakistan, lakhs of people have shifted from this place and are refugees in their own country. Hundreds of houses have been burnt down, schools, hospitals, old and new temples and even many of the Muslim holy places have been damaged. Imagine the brutality of the attackers who in Wondhama after asking for food from a house, killed all the inmates who served them well and snatched a child of one-and-a-half years from the breast of his mother and pumped 28 bullets into its body. Atrocities committed by these invaders for the last 10 years are innumerable and inhuman. They killed women by sawing them into two and throwing them into drains. These people had no guts to face the armed men but acted like thieves and dacoits by resorting to killing mercilessly during the dark nights, attacking buses and killing travellers of Hindu community. For the last 10 years now, people are not at all assured of any peace. No one can say how and what stand will be taken by the countries who have been funding and supplying arms and ammunition to Pakistan. In fact, the UN should have taken an early action and dissuaded all these countries not to escalate the proxy war any longer. The world organisation should take steps to rehabilitate all the migrant people in different areas of Jammu and Kashmir and provide them with schools, hospitals and all other necessities. All the temples and religious places should be repaired and whenever possible reconstructed and beautified by fresh plantation and environmental development. This immediate task should be undertaken by the UN at an early date. And the whole area should be declared world heritage area and no country should have the courage to inflict such atrocities on the people of the state.

these fountains [illegible] religion but only the religion of destruction [illegible]

[illegible] Kashmir and declaring it as world heritage [illegible] of [illegible] all calligraphic [illegible] this part of India which [illegible] considered [illegible] paradise on earth [illegible] back to the state [illegible] of centuries [illegible] to [illegible]

Though it is not possible to assess the extent of the damage done by mercenaries from many Muslim countries, including Pakistan, lakhs of people have shifted from this place and live as refugees in their own country. Hundreds of houses have been burnt down, schools, hospitals, old and new temples and even many of the Muslim holy places have been damaged. [illegible] of the attackers who [illegible] house, killed all the inmates who [illegible] them and snatched a child of one-and-a-half years from the breast of its mother and pumped 28 bullets into its body. [illegible] for the last 10 years [illegible] killed women by sawing them into two and throwing them into drums. These people had no guts to face [illegible] like thieves and dacoits by [illegible] the dark nights, attacking [illegible] community [illegible] for the last 10 years [illegible] of any peace [illegible] the countries who have been [illegible] arms and ammunition to Pakistan. In fact, the UN should have taken ready action and [illegible] proper war and [illegible] to rehabilitate all the migrant people [illegible] and Kashmir and provide them with schools, hospitals and all other necessities. All the temples and religious places should be repaired and wherever possible [illegible] and beautified by fresh plantation and environmental development. This immediate task should be undertaken by [illegible] at an early date. And the whole area should be declared [illegible] and no country should have the right to [illegible] the people of the state.

CHAPTER 22

Kashmiris : Their Nature and Consciousness

*Prof. S. Bhatt**

I have chosen Kashmir and its people, their nature and consciousness as the topic for this paper. The reason for my selection is that by our study of the true nature and consciousness of the people of Kashmir, we are able to determine their genuine aspirations for day to day life and progress in a scientific world order and in the rich diversity of Indian life. India comprises a mix of various cultures and life-styles. These are woven together in a fabric which lends a rich and charming look to the composite culture of India.

The poets and seers in Kashmir have in particular provided their thoughts which have helped the growth of a unified image of the culture of India through times immemorial. The recent wave of violence in Kashmir seems to be a temporary phase which may even have passed away bringing back images of harmony and love. The violence of gun was planted in Kashmir from across the borders in Kashmir. This culture of violence seems to be evaporating in the thin air by now.

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* Dr. S. Bhatt, Hony. Professor of International Law, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, was invited to read this paper at the XIX Indian Social Science Congress at the University of Allahabad from March 11-14, 1996.

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We shall also examine the synthesis in the Kashmiri traditions that helps us combine and synthesis cultures, spiritual beliefs, and scientific disciplines. To comprehend nature and spiritual reality needs a vast and global consciousness. Modern science also attempts to syntheses various aspects of scientific themes in order to comprehend nature and its processes. The global environment movement of our times has produced a grand synthesis of many a scientific and social discipline and provides a biologist view of the world with interrelatedness of the laws of nature. Towards this worldwide environment movement, we are happy to note that Kashmiri thought and culture have much to contribute, based on the nature and consciousness of the people of Kashmir.

I am reminded of Plato who in his book *The Republic* says:

> We must look for artists and craftsmen capable of perceiving the real nature of what is beautiful and then our young men, living as it were in a healthy climate, will benefit because all the works of art they see and hear influence them for good, like the breezes from some healthy country....[1]

Plato also advises poets, "to portray good character in their poems or not to write at all...."[2]

In our endeavour here to portray the people of Kashmir, we are therefore keen to highlight the good character and nature of the people of Kashmir.

Nature and Consciousness of Kashmiris

Kashmiris have tremendous love for nature. Being surrounded by overwhelming beauty of nature comprising of rivers, mountains, valleys, flowers and birds, the people of Kashmir imbibe in them a harmonious outlook towards nature and society.

The poets and seers have described the harmony of nature and man. Lalleshwari, the saint poetess who lived around 1317 and 1391 A.D. in Kashmir was a legendary seer who was the founder of the culture and ethos of the people of Kashmir in the

Middle Ages. She practised Saiva philosophy. As a writer has said about Lalleshwari, "The highest type of Bhakti is identical with highest state of knowledge."[3] Of Lalleshwari, the great poet saint Sheikh Nur-ud-din said with reverence:

> That Lalla of Padmanpur – she drank
> her fill of divine nectar.
> She was indeed an Avtara.
> O God, grant me the selfsame boon.[4]

Thus we see in historical perspective how Hindu and Muslim unity is perceived in the worship of God and in the philosophy of living.

Laying stress on the God within, Lalleshwari says:

> Why are you groping like one blind?
> If you are wise, enter within;
> Siva is very much there,
> Go not here and there.[5]

Incidentally, Lalleshwari does not believe in the renunciation of worldly life. She is keen on action, thus reiterating what Bhagwad Gita had said since ancient times. What she recommends is the art of living, and combining action with renunciation. One should not worry for the fruits of labour, she says.

Rupa Bhawani was another great saint-poetess of Kashmir who has left an everlasting imprint on the minds of people of Kashmir. She was born in 1625 A.D. Her father, Madhav Dhar, used to worship Sharika Bhagwati and visit Hari Parbat early in the morning. Rupa Bhawani was born on the first day of Navaratra. She considered Lalleshwari her guru. Of her life's philosophy, Rupa Bhawani says:

> I did not come on this earth as a seed,
> To fall in the circle of births,
> I am not the elements –
> Earth, water, fire, air and ether,
> I am beyond the primordial universal self
> and the individual self,
> I am the Supreme Consciousness.[6]

The above translation of Kashmiri poetry is provided by a noted scholar, Prof. Jankinath Kaul 'Kamal'.

Kashmiri Pandits in particular observe Rupa Bhawani's passing away in 1721 A.D. as Sahibi Saptami day and observe a fast to mark the holy day.

Sheikh Nur-ud-Din, also called Nunda Rishi, or Nunda Ryosh in Kashmir, was a great saint of Kashmir who has left an everlasting imprint on the nature and consciousness of Kashmiris. He lived in Kashmir during the period 1378 to 1438 A.D. His Rishinama or Nurnama were written about 200 years after his passing away.[7] Mir Mohammed Hamdani recognised Nur-ud-Din as the light of faith. He was recognised by Hindus as also the Muslims. He stressed the need for unity among the two communities. For his secular views, he was imprisoned by Ali Shah, the Muslim ruler of his time. As J.N. Ganhar writes:

> The Sheikh's spiritual eminence and his humanistic philosophy made him the idol of the people of Kashmir. They flocked to him and some of them modelled their very lives on his pattern. These latter who came to be known as Rishis, after him, were of great help and assistance to him in the stupendous task that he had undertaken.[8]

It may be recalled that Rishis were not new to Kashmiri thought and culture. They were known to exist among Hindus in Kalhana's time in the Hindu period such as Vishwamitra, Vashista *et. al.*[9]

Indeed Rishis were great seers with high spiritual attainments in Kashmir as in other parts of India. As Ganhar points out, "in organising the Rishi order, Nund Rishi had the example of the Buddhist Sangha, which was common order in Kashmir before the entry of Islam in Kashmir." Referring to Khalil's Rishinama, Ganhar says:

> In this work the author has ascribed a 2500-verse in the Sanskrit work, *Buddha-charita* to Nund Rishi. According to Baba Khalil, the work was composed by him on his reemergence from a 12-year sojourn in a cave at Kaimoh on the ninth of Chaitra, a very sacred day in the Hindu calendar, both in Kashmir and the rest of India.[10]

Ganhar feels that Baba Khalil not being conversant with Sanskrit, the Rishinama referred to above by Nund Rishi could be based on Buddha Charita, which he kept with him.

Thus we see a synthesis of spiritual philosophy by Nund Rishi by combining truth from various sources of historical wisdom. It may be recalled that the demolition of Nund Rishi's tomb at Charar-e-Sharief by foreign mercenaries in Kashmir in 1995 provoked a widespread protest from the people of Kashmir.

Kalhana Pandit was a great historian and philosopher of Kashmir. His masterpiece book, *Rajatarangini*, was written by him during 1148 and 1150 A.D. As Jawaharlal Nehru records in his Foreword to R.S. Pandit's translation of *Rajatarangini*, ".....Kalhana's book is something far more than a record of the king's doings. It is a rich storehouse of information, political, social and, to some extent, economic."[11]

Jawaharlal Nehru says he owes to Kalhana the revival of his love for his homeland, Kashmir. As he says:

> I have read this story of olden times with interest because I am a lover of Kashmir and all its enchanting beauty, because perhaps, deep down within me and almost forgotten by me, there is something which stirs at the call of the old homeland from whence we came long, long ago....[12]

In 1892, Sir Aurel Stein published a critical translation of *Rajatarangini*. It was at the same time that another work on *Rajatarangini* was published by Pandit Durga Prasada.[13] As R.S. Pandit says, *Rajatarangini* "was not only a work of serious contribution to history, it was preeminently a work of art".[14]

It is necessary to recall the genesis of Indian civilization in the context of modern times. The consciousness displayed in historical context by Kalhana and others in Kashmir proves once again that people in Kashmir have shown harmony and love without which art and culture cannot grow. Kalhana reminds of bygone days in Kashmir and the love of people for nature and mysticism. Arnold Toynbee, another historian of modern times, also believes that it is necessary "to conceive the genesis of a

civilization as an act of creation involving a process of change in Time".[15] While there is bound to be change in keeping with times, the values of harmony and love stand out for all times as values that guide nations to progress. Kashmir, therefore, abounds in its history with eminent sages and artists like Kalhana who provide ideas for our thought and action in troubled times as well. Such people can be compared with Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle.

Habba Khatoon, the nightingale of Kashmir, was another great poetess of Kashmir who rose from humble beginnings and became the queen in 1570 A.D. She married King Yusuf Shah Chak.[16] According to Professor Wakhlu, "Habba Khatoon was not simply decorative – a mere joy to the eye. She had real qualities of sharp intellect and imagination."[17]

Habba Khatoon suffered a lot, and that too quietly, as her husband Yusuf Shah was imprisoned by the Mughal King. On her death, Wakhlu writes: "The whole of Kashmir wept when they heard of Habba Khatoon's death; no smoke came out of the houses on that tragic day. Habba Khatoon had risen as a luminous moon in the firmament of Kashmir's history."[18]

Mysticism and Synthesis in Kashmir's Traditions

Kashmir's history abounds with tales of great seers and saints who were great mystics. Mysticism is the art and practice of contemplation by man about the mysteries of nature. It follows out of great devotion to God and love of humankind.

Mysticism, when combined with the synthetic view of the world, has produced spiritual philosophies of high order such as Shaivism and Sufism. The importance of these philosophies can hardly be stressed in the modern scientific world. For, science itself is the art of finding truth and the laws of nature that mystics dream about. Indeed, the philosophy of science looks with new expectations towards thematic origins of scientific thoughts which provide a bridge over ignorance. Professor Gerold Holton of Harvard University and the Chairman of the History of Science of that University, has written a book with the title "The Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought From Kepler to Einstein" which demands attention by scholars in India and elsewhere.

Great mystics in Kashmir have shown the path of love and human brotherhood. The example of great sages of Kashmir is recalled here such as Utpaala, Somananda, Abhinavgupta and Lalleshwari who in ancient times practised Shaivism. In the recent period, Bhagwan Gopi Nath, Swami Lakshmanjoo, Swami Parmanand, Swami Nandlal, Swami Shankar Razdan, and Swami Vidyadhar were seers of the highest order who brought peace to Kashmir. There have been great Sufi saints in Kashmir. Among these we recall the intense love and mysticism practised by Nund Rishi, Samad Mir and Ahad Zargar.[19] Dr. A.N. Raina, a noted scholar on Kashmiri culture, says : "Mystics in Kashmir do not differ from other mystics in basic principle of oneness that is beyond senses and reason. As a matter of fact, mystic experience is the same in all languages and with different races and religions."[20]

Dr. Raina refers to the following opinion of another great scholar from Kashmir, Prof. J.L. Kaul (who died in 1986):

> Mysticism is a dominant theme in Kashmiri poetry as, I dare say, in the poetry of all Indian languages. Right from the fourteenth century from Shiti Kantha, Lal Ded and Noor-ud-din Vali (Nund Rishi) up to the Lila Songs of Krishna Razdan (who died in 1925), the Sufi songs of Samad Mir (died in 1959), and Ahad Zargar of the present day, we have had noteworthy mystic poets – both Hindus and Muslims.[21]

The present writer has edited a volume in which over sixty prominent authors from Kashmir have contributed their intellectual work towards describing mysticism and synthesis in Kashmiri tradition. The book entitled "Kashmiri Pandits : A Cultural Heritage" was released in 1995.[22] In this book, I have recalled Rabindranath Tagore who says that in ancient India the cultural heritage symbolized the growth of men with the living growth of nature. The emphasis was on realising harmony between man's spirit and the spirit of the world.[23]

The essence of combining mysticism with modern science philosophy by Kashmiri scholars has been stated by me as follows:

> It may be of great interest to the world at large that members of our community, some working outside India, have been

exposed to highest wisdom of modern science. And, in the years to come, these scientists will combine the creativity of science-philosophy and Kashmiri mysticism to open up new frontiers of science and knowledge.[24]

Synthesis in Modern Science Philosophy : A Biologist View of World

"Science", says Einstein, "is the attempt to make the chaotic diversity of our sense-experience correspond to a logically uniform system of thought."[25]

In the scientific thought and experience, the process of analysis and synthesis takes place with a view to reach the hidden laws of nature. As Einstein says, "what science strives for is an utmost acuteness and clarity of concepts as regards their mutual relations and their correspondence to a sensory data."[26]

Thus, Einstein does not discard sense impressions that mystics dream about, or the sensory data. He also emphasises mutual relatedness of the laws of nature and of concepts.

It is interesting to recall here an international symposium held by UNESCO entitled "Science and Synthesis" on the 10th death anniversary of Einstein, and a great biologist, T. de Chardin.[27] I think this symposium marks a watershed in man's exploration of scientific and biologist world of harmony and truth. It strengthened the evolving image of a biologist view of present day world order.

After all, we are illumined by the mysticism of the great visionary scientists, like Einstein, and others, for our search of a new and peaceful world order. As a great scientist, H.L.R. Finch, has said about Einstein:

> Einstein found, as Spinoza did, that the human qualities of modesty, equanimity, universality, equality and kindness were actually promoted by a sense of the vast impersonality of truth and of a natural law and harmony far beyond human hopes, fears and wishes.[28]

According to Professor Gerold Holton, a great thinker, Einstein used to think with images. He quotes Einstein: "The whole of science is nothing more than a refinement of everyday thinking."[29]

Therefore, Kashmiri mystics and thinkers who promoted harmony and love were endowed with great vision, like the scientists. Indeed, Kepler, Newton and Galileo, were great mystics too, who lived and shaped the scientific thought in the Middle Ages.[30]

The UNESCO symposium referred to earlier recalled the "perennial freshness" of thoughts of Einstein and Chardin. The speakers said both of them had devoted their lives to the problems of mankind. In this context we need to recast some of our own ideas. The UNESCO symposium laid great stress on the intellectual synthesis for understanding of man and the universe. It referred to Chardin's contribution to evolution of man and various dimensions of life. Rene Makan, the then Director General of UNESCO, said their organisation was dedicated to synthesis and interdisciplinary view of life essential for understanding of our civilization.[31] He said : "The synthesizing process is, of course, essential to the maintenance of balance among all the parts and at all the levels of science."[32] He said science does not aspire for the unity of knowledge alone, but for the unity of minds as well. Einstein is quoted that pure thought can grasp reality as ancients had dreamt.[33]

Another scientist, R.F. Ruso, said in the UNESCO symposium that we need the "science of science", which means "the effort we must make to understand the broad movement of science and the links which exist between the different sciences."[34]

B. Kendrov said we need specialists in natural sciences with knowledge of philosophy. Also, we must look for the historian in science to combine a unified view of past, present and future in scientific thought.[35]

Einstein provided a synthesis of space and time and mass and energy. Chardin attempted to unify biological sciences.

Biologist view of World

In addition to Chadrin, we have other modern biologist thinkers such as Julian Huxley (also a Director General of UNESCO at one time), Rene Dubos, Margaret Mead and others who have brought before mankind the vision that mankind is one species. They have given us hope based on their scientific studies that man as a species is basically a social animal who cooperates in society and loves his species. The second most important finding is that the biological world is based on a relatedness of natural laws. Thus the plant life, the climates, the hydrological cycle, and other natural processes are interconnected. And, therefore, man's activities and life-style have their import on the natural ecosystems. An ecosystem approach to life on this planet has become necessary for progress and harmony. All this means that man's new-found understanding of biological world gives us new dimensions of our behaviour towards harmony and peace among nations and with the nature.

Toynbee is recalled here on the nature of human spirit. He says:

> I shall maintain that spirit, and particularly the creative spiritual effect of suffering for the sake of love, is the distinctive and significant feature of human affairs.[36]

Kashmiri mind and consciousness abound in love and creative suffering for the sake of love.

The Global Environment Movement

We have examined how science produces synthesis of various disciplines which is essential for progress of mankind. We have also seen how a biologist view has emerged as a world-wide philosophical guide for living This philosophical development in science is in harmony with the nature and consciousness of people of Kashmir who have a synthesised view of life and nature.

Here, we will briefly recall how Kashmiri mind and consciousness is related to another phenomenon of our civilization: The Global Environment Movement.

During the past two and a half decades, especially after the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in 1972, a new global consciousness has emerged for the protection of global environment.

The preamble to the UN Declaration calls for "the need for a common outlook and for common principles to inspire and guide the peoples of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment." The Declaration has produced some universal principles of international law and behaviour as a guide for living on this planet. It calls for sustainable development, control of population, control of pollution of air, water and land areas, etc. The central thesis contained in the Declaration may be stated as follows:

> For the purpose of attaining freedom in a world of nature, man must use knowledge to build in collaboration with nature a better environment. To defend and improve the human environment for present and future generations has become an imperative goal for mankind, a goal to be pursued together with, and in harmony with, the established and fundamental goals of peace and of world-wide economic and social development.

The environment movement has evolved new awareness of man for harmony towards nature and towards man. The movement calls for conservation of nature and protection of environment. The Declaration of United Nations has called for a new fundamentalism whose goals are to establish peace and worldwide economic and social development of man.

Therefore, people in Kashmir are looking forward to join this global movement for peace and protection of environment such as the lakes, forests, valleys and the heritage of mankind. The element of peace is based on rediscovering the unity in the diversity of nature and of the composite culture of the country. As Tagore says:

> This principle of unity is the mystery of all mysteries. The existence of a duality at once raises a question in our minds, and we seek its solution in one. When at last we find a

relation between these two and thereby see them as one in essence, we feel that we have come to the truth.[37]

Mahjoor, a great poet from Kashmir, was also inspired by Rabindranath Tagore, and created a great vision of peace and harmony among communities. He said:

Wolo ha bagbano navbaharuk shaan paida kar;
pholan gul gath karan bulbul tithee samaan paida kar.

[Come, O Gardener! get excited with the new spring;
When flowers will blossom and *bulbul* (nightingale)
Will dance, create that consciousness.]

Again, Mahjoor recalls the Unity in Diversity of our national life. He says:

Hendya ratan nam khoor wayan Ahal-e-Din,
Naav yemi Mulkech, chalavaw panavany

[The Hindus will provide direction for the boat and
Muslims will row it,
We shall thus steer the boat of the country together.]

While analysing issues we are following the advice of Plato that as writers it is our duty to describe the beautiful in the world so as to create a vision for progress. Kashmir and its people are a part of India for centuries and love the composite culture of India. The people of Kashmir have noble and kind sentiments for peace and harmony among people. They uphold values of secularism. Shaivism and Sufism are philosophies of a high order which describe the synthesis in Kashmir's spiritual traditions. Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism have blended together to reiterate the common goals contained in all religions. Sages like Lalleshwari, Nund Rishi and others, provide the torchlight for love and brotherhood of mankind.

Jawaharlal Nehru was also a modern sage who tried to synthesize the social philosophy of India for common brotherhood and international peace. Benevolent kings of Kashmir such as Zain-ul-Abidin, also called Bud Shah, have shown the path of harmony and love among people. Other scholars such as Professor J.L. Kaul, poet Chakbast and Dinanath Nadim, wrote in praise of

nature and the people of India, including Kashmir. Mahjoor was an outstanding poet of Kashmir who emulated Tagore and who gave a call to seek a new consciousness that spring brings, of cheer and hope among people. He called for the unity of mankind and of all religions.

Today's period is, therefore, historic indeed to recall the nature and consciousness of the people of Kashmir. The temporary upsurge of violence and gun culture is bound to disappear and pave way for eternal traditions of love and non-violence.

Furthermore, we are witness to the great synthesis of scientific disciplines that has charted new vistas of progress for the world at large. Einstein, Chardin, Sir Jagdish Chander Bose, Hargovind Khurana, Abdul Kalam and Abdul Salam are great names from the scientific world who have attempted to describe the mysteries of nature based on synthesis. Besides, the modern world view is based on the biological and ecological foundations and relatedness of the laws of nature.

The United Nations Declaration at Stockholm in 1972 has brought forth the era of global environment movement. We cannot possibly ignore these positive indications for mankind's progress. The Kashmiri ethos and culture supports the principle of the 1972 UN Declaration which calls for synthesis, harmony among people and the protection of environment. Therefore, let us heed the poet Mahjoor who has called upon the gardener to create a new consciousness of spring, when the *bulbul* will dance and the flowers will blossom.

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CHAPTER 23

Kashmiri Pandit – Response to Contemporary Problems

Dr. Susheela Bhan

The Kashmiri Pandit, the battered victim of repeated religious, social and political holocausts, is once again struggling for his survival. Compulsively, he weaves the narrative of his diaspora and cultural displacement, his putrefied present and a looming future extinction, around his resplendent antiquity and heritage – a past that produced a *Rajtarangini*, the Shaiva philosophy, the Mahayana Buddhism, the Kamasutra, the Lalla 'Vakhs', the Sharda Peeth, the peaks in architecture, not to speak of the Kashmiri missionaries who carried the message of the Buddha to Central Asia and China. His tragedy, however, is that even as he glosses over the centuries of persecution, torture, death and destruction he suffered under the Muslim dispensation, lest he hurts the sensibilities and designs of the so-called Indian secularists, the rational transparency of the meaning and signification of his contributions to what made 'The Glory That Was India', stands ruptured and, in effect invalidated. Little wonder that in utter despiar he asks sometimes whether to be heard and recognised he needs to redefine his identity or to take on a fake one and remain a wandering stranger to himself.

Where does a KP stand today?

Does the Kashmiri Pandit then have no place in India's unique, complex and plural social structure wherein nine of the

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major world religions flourish with umpteen cultures and subcultures within them? Does the Constitution of India that structured its secular polity on freedom and equality guaranteed by the non-negotiable fundamental rights for all its citizens, plus special safeguards of minorities, have no protection for him? Ashwani Bhan, the young boy from Jammu, said it all in his lament published by *Koshur Samachar* in the June, 1998, issue:

> The Kashmiri Hindu
> Humiliated from every penny
> Standing in long queues
> In scorching sun for relief and ration,
> Eking out a dreadful existence,
> Facing extinction in exile,
> Stripped of all honour and respect,
> Exploited by one and all,
> Yes, I am a Kashmiri Hindu,
> Doomed to live a wretched life
> Of a refugee in Our Mighty Bharat.

Who, after all, is the Kashmiri Pandit? Is he an Indian Kurd in making? Is he a part of the large majority of the Indian Hindus or a minority in the Muslim-majority Kashmir or both or neither? Is his predicament akin to that of Palestinians as described by the illustrious Edward said:

> "The Palestinians are a commodity. Producing ourselves much as the masahib, lamps, tapestries, baskets, embroideries, mother-of-pearl trinkets are produced. We turn ourselves into objects not for sale but for scrutiny. People ask us, as if looking into an exhibit case, what is it you Palestinians want? – as if we can put our demands into a net single phrase.
>
> When did we become a people? When did we stop being one? Or are we in the process of becoming one? We frequently end our letters with the mottoes "Palestinian Love" or "Palestinian Kisses...."
>
> The present tense is subject to echoes from the past, verbs of sight give way to verbs of sound and smell, and one sense interweaves with another ... Our characteristic mode

then is not a narrative in which scenes take place seriatum, but rather broken narratives, fragmentary compositions and self-consciously staged testimonials, in which the narrative voice keeps stumbling over itself, its obligations and its limitations.

There is no completely coherent discourse adequate to us ... Miscellaneous, the spaces here and there in our midst include but do not comprehend the past; they represent building without overall purpose, around an uncharted and only partially surveyed territory. Without a centre. Atonal."

Literature in exile

One has just to go through the literature that the Kashmiri Pandit voice in 'exile' has produced during the last decade or the paintings where silence and colours speak through the luminous metaphors of his culture. These are not merely the laments on his genocide, the images of his identity or the narratives of historicism but more fundamentally the contradictions reflected by a paranoia and a melancholia emerging out of a psyche lacerated by an unending stream of antagonism, aggression and perversion, on the one hand, and the steeling of a will to steer himself out of his despair and mobilize his inner resources to challenge and seek an alternative to the inchoate social order that has brought him to his nemesis, on the other. The lacerated psyche now finds itself superimposed by a psyche in exile and diaspora, staring at a future that may never materialize. A living death, is it? Here is a specimen from another youngster Siddhartha Gigoo (*Koshur Samachar*, May 1997):

I Die While I Live
I see a crowd pelting stones
at my long deserted house.

I feel
the grief of my father's
stolen books.

I search
the revelled-up threads
of my family's ancestry.

I preserve
the salvaged roots
of a migrant's being.

I trace
the lost ways
of my lost playground.

I hear
the bell chime
from a distant temple.

I steal
solitude from my
mortgaged self.

I die while I live.

Determination to flight

This miasma of despair, however, has not paralysed the Kashmiri Pandit. Although unused to protest, much less to rebellion, he, up against a wall, is determined to fight as he has done through periods of turbulence in the past, with the barest of material resources but with the indomitable spirit of a true Shaiva rooted in the spiritual civilizational ethos of Kashmir, central to his existence, not for now but eternally. That is what his identity is about.

That also is what his 'past-presentness' is about. That is what his 'Kashmiri Love' and 'Kashmiri Kisses' are about. And that is why his response to his persecution and ethnic cleansing seeks restoration of a sense of himself, assertion of his past to create a future that would cease to remain fragile and unfulfillable, for he knows too well that the metaphors of a national culture cannot deliver him even in this state of emergency which is not the exception, but the rule, for him.

Soul-threatening scenario

What precisely does the Kashmiri Pandit want? The point to note is that the modernist and post-modernist Indian scenario is threatening his soul as that of India, its very identity. Modernity

and globalization are homogenization, the harbinger of a crisis of denial of alternative approaches to life in a country where innumerable pluralities in dynamic coexistence and interaction get reflected and nourished in multifarious ideologies, belief systems, life-styles and pathways to divine relaization. Kashmir, as the rest of the subcontinent, rejected nothing, promoted deep reflection and questioning, evolved new alternatives and spaces all the time, but retained a basic continuity of thought and creativity. The process was underlined by principles of balance and complimentarity, not by atomization of individuals and communities, not by disintegrating fissures and conflicts of a unilinear development.

Within the paradigm of modernity, the Kashmiri Pandit typifies and finds himself encountered as 'the other', the insignificant and hence dispensable. When he revolts against his ethnic cleansing and diaspora, the choppers and the bullets, the torched homes and temples, the tatterted tents, the miserable relief and rationed grains of his camp life, the modernist takes note and makes promises too. Indeed, he finds many sympathizers in terms of his demand for right to life, land and economic, political and social security. These are the 'absolutes' of modernity even as they have been denied to him. His predicament, however, goes much deeper and that is his failure to illuminate the element of darkness that cuts him off from himself. He is lost and marginalized in a milieu that does not recognize the necessity of thinking the unthought, giving language to what is mute but of essence to his spirituality, humanism and holism – the horizons of his cultural identity.

His search does not limit itself to solutions that are promised to him, including that of fire-fighting and trouble-shooting. In a world of compartments, he seeks a oneness, a reunion on the tacit premise of his heritage which treated the body as a chariot, the senses as its horses, the mind its rein, the intellect its charioteer and the soul its goal. Pravahini Bradoo of the Indian School is Muscat exhorts the community towards what she calls the 'Final Reunion' (*Koshur Samachar*, July 1996):

The Final Reunion

Time has come,
When we have to unite ourselves,
Strengthen our bonds of love and concern,
Breaking through invisible barriers of hatred,
Destroying feelings of enigmatic superiority,
Filling crevices of jealousy and contempt.

It is time to rise from the ashes,
Like the mythical Phoenix,
For the needs of mankind –
For the sake of ourselves ...
It is time –
for the final reunion.

Another poem by Sameer Kak Sukhdev (*Koshur Samachar*, June 1998) too merits space here:

Sanctuary

Citizens of the world above,
Come down to Earth below.
Nature is our mother,
The Earth is your home as well.

Seek sanctuary;
This world shall shelter all.
Beings from another realm,
Seek succour in the light of truth;

Far from the stillness of the night,
Let not the psyche of fear intrude.
The salve of love shall soothe the hurt,
And all the wounds shall heal in time.

The presence of the history of the Kashmiri Pandit is pervasive and profound. As such, he must respond critically and selectively to the modes of modernization to be able to preserve, renew and redefine the humanistic vision of his past. He cannot but revolt against the massive intrusion of historical outgrowths and values that promote divisive and oppressive structures. His tensions and contradictions stem from his inability to reinforce

humanizing processes and sources of spirituality to which he clings, no matter how indifferent and hostile he finds the environment around him.

Indian Identity in Danger

That was Gandhi's agenda for the country. So also that of Tagore. "India is in danger of losing its soul", warned Gandhi. "She cannot lose it and live. She must not, therefore, sit lazily and helplessly. I cannot escape the mad onrush of the West. She must be strong enough to resist it for her own sake and that of the world." Similarly, Tagore set the terms of discourse. "You must apply your Eastern mind, your spiritual strength, your love of simplicity, your recognition of social obligations", he observed, "to cut out a new path for unworldly car of progress shrieking out its loud discards as it runs".

The loss of the identity of the Kashmiri Pandit would, indeed, be the loss of India's identity. The politician may find him dispensable for he is not a vote bank. But the Indian intellectual ought to know better, acknowledge his responsibility and rise up to it. Minimally, then, he ought to look at the Kashmiri Pandit not superficially as at an 'exhibit case', but deeply, to comprehend the meaning and import of his plight and search. More importantly, he ought to join him in his fluctuating movement to call into question an order where aggression, competition and consumerism spatialize power and psyche with no defences available to the victim.

The Kashmiri Pandit, let there be no mistake about it, is the open festering sore that symbolizes the split in India's polity, its very personality. His grim fight is the most crucial of India's battles that he must win for himself, for his country and, as Gandhi would say, for the collectivity of the human race. Will the Indian intellectual "apply his Eastern mind" and lend him a hand?

[Reprinted : Courtesy *Koshur Samachar*, September, 1998]

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PART - V

PRESENTATION PAPERS : THE FUTURE OF KASHMIRI PANDITS

CHAPTER 24

The Future of Kashmiri Pandits

*C.L. Gadoo**

The present plight of Kashmiri Pandits is the end-product of what our community has been facing for the past six and a half centuries. Thus, our present cannot be divorced from our past. And to talk about our future at this point of time without taking full cognizance of our past would, in my view, not yield any gains. To make my point more clear, I must say that our community, the Saraswats of Kashmir, with a glorious history of thousands of years at their back, have been at the receiving end now for over six and a half centuries. Their decline in Kashmir began in 1339 AD when a Muslim courtier in the court of the last Hindu king of Kashmir, usurped the throne treacherously. The full impact of the treachery became visible with the advent of Sultan Sikander Butshikan (destroyer of idols) forty years later. The full fury of fanaticism was unleashed on the largely peaceful Hindus of Kashmir during the next forty years. This was the time (AD. 1379-1420) when most of the Saraswats of Kashmir were either killed or had to flee from their millennia-old homeland for the plains and coastal areas of India, mostly the western coast.

Distinct history and culture

As I have said, Pandits of Kashmir, the Rishi Bhoomi of yore, have had a distinguished history and rich culture that produced a renowned historian of great calibre, Kalhana Pandit of the *Rajatarangini* fame. *Rajatarangini,* as you know, is the first

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recorded history in India. Apart from this, the Shiv-Shakti cult and the Mahayana Buddhism originated from Kashmir, besides a lot of literature on religion, philosophy, history etc. All this in Sanskrit, the mother-tongue of the great Bharatvarsha, the language of Shrimad Bhagwad Gita.

It was this very talented community of Kashmir, the progeny of Vedic Rishis, which was brought to the brink of total destruction during just forty years of fanatical Islamic rule (1379 to 1420, AD), calamitous times for them. Tradition has it that only eleven Kashmiri Pandit families could survive the catastrophe. The next fifty years (1420-1470 AD) of King Zian-ul-Abiddin Badshah or the great king saw reversal of the process of persecution of Kashmiri Hindus. They were recalled, their temples and shrines rebuilt and they were allowed freedom of faith. There is no record to indicate how many returned and how many were added to the eleven families, which had survived the butchery of the previous fifty years.

It was at this point of time that the surviving Kashmiri Pandits, produced a Messiah of their own, in the person of the great Shree Bhat. He re-organised this very much thinned society of Kashmiri Saraswat Brahmins who had no *Yajmans* to whose spiritual and religious need they could cater. All the *Yajmans* had either been killed or converted, forcibly or otherwise, to Islam. Shree Bhat created a new class a new class of Purohits from among them. It will be interesting to recollect here that the elder son or the eldest daughter of any family was selected to pursue religious and spiritual studies and in time to cater to these needs of the family. The others were freed for temporal work like agriculture, etc. In the course of a century or so, those left free for temporal jobs shifted to almost all the court languages according to needs of the time. They mastered Arabic, Persian, English and Urdu languages apart from Hindi. This period also saw the emergence of the saint-poetess, Lalleshwari, who gave a new dimension to the Shaiva-Shakti cult as also the birth of Rishi-Sufi cult of Kashmir urging peace and brotherhood among Hindus and Muslims.

the Mughal Period

The next 120 years or so was comparatively peaceful, with some interludes of religious persecution, when the Kashmiri

Pandits learnt to live with Islam according to the preaching of Lalleshwari and Nunda Rishi. The annexation of Kashmir to the Mughal Empire in 1586 AD ushered in an era of peace for the Kashmiri Pandits, marred only by the puritanical disposition, bordering on fanaticism, of the last known Moghul emperor, Aurangzeb (1658-1707 AD). Many of his Subedars were under instruction to convert all Kashmiri Pandits to Islam which he had expected would help him to convert the Brahmins of Varanasi leading in turn to conversion of mass of Hindus in Northern India to Islam. This process was thwarted by the supreme sacrifice offered by the ninth Sikh Guru, Tegh Bahadur ji. This all is recorded history.

The decline of Moghuls after Aurangzeb led the Kashmiri Pandits to another calamitous period of about 67 years. (1753-1820 AD) of brutal Afghan rule. This was broken after the Sikh ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab annexed Kashmir in 1818 AD. This was followed by a brief Sikh rule followed by Dogra monarchy (1846-1947 AD).

Sikh Dogra Rule

The 128-year rule of Sikh/Dogra (1819-1947) saw the flowering of Kashmiri Pandits both in Kashmir and in other parts of India. The Pandits in Kashmir took to modern education in English and produced brilliant administrators, educationists, doctors, engineers, advocates, judges and the like. The euphoria thus generated, made them ignore business and industry. They also participated in the democratic processes which had become the order of the day in India (against British rule) and in Kashmir against the autocratic dispensation of the day, though the ruler thereof was not an alien. As night follows the day and darkness the sunshine, the 128-year calm in Kashmir and in the lives of Kashmiri Pandits was shattered by the partition in 1947 of India on the basis of the obnoxious two-nations theory. This played havoc with the Pandits in Kashmir. From 1947 onwards they were treated as Hindus, rather than Kashmiris, who had contributed generously to the development of Kashmir on modern lines in all walks of life.

Post-1947 Turmoil

Thus began another turmoil in their lives. To begin with they were divested of their landed properties in the name of "land to the tiller", and deprived of other opportunities to grow along with their Muslim compatriots. The democratic rule in Kashmir ushered in Kashmir in 1947 was steadily transformed into Muslim rule with no consideration for the minority. As a result of these machinations and manipulations, thousands of Kashmiri Pandits had to migrate once again to the plains of India for employment and sustenance. Their population percentage in Kashmir started going down from 15% in 1947, reaching a low of 5% in 1981. In the meanwhile they had started to switch over to business, industry and tourism etc., apart from public employment which was dwindling in any case.

The Muslims in Kashmir are the ruling elite of the state. They dominate its entire economic organisation and enjoy communal precedence in all social forums. Islam is virtually the official religion of the State. Whereas the Muslims constitute a little more than half the population of the state, they possess three-fourths share in legislative bodies, administrative organisations and all the local Government institutions. In the Kashmir province, the Hindus have no elected representation in the State legislature, nor do they have any elected representation in the local bodies. They constituted less than five per cent of the administrative services of the State and have less than one per cent share in the higher cadres of the state administration. Muslims monopolise 94 per cent of the State services in Kashmir. The Hindus of Kashmir province have absolutely no share in the decision making bodies of the State Government, which have always been constituted by the Muslims of the Kashmir Province. More than 90 per cent of the admissions to professional, technical and other educational institutions are reserved for Muslims in one form or the other, purely on communal basis. The Hindus, Sikhs and other minorities share a bare 8 per cent of the educational facilities that the State provides.

The Muslims own and control the entire economic and industrial structure of the Kashmir Province. They own 96 per cent of the agricultural land, orchards and other urban landed estates. They enjoy a monopoly over the entire industrial,

organisation, trade, commerce, financial resources and exports of the province of Kashmir. They have complete monopoly in trading in fruits, carpets, shawls, woodwork, woollens, silk etc. The Hindus in Kashmir have never been allowed to have any share in the tourist industry, the transport organisation, concessionaire contracts for the construction of the State property, roads and buildings and the licenses for imports and exports which the State Government has been lavishly distributing among the Muslims.

Quit Kashmir Call for the Pandits

The Kashmiri Pandits awakened to a devastating call to quit Kashmir "without their womenfolk" late in the evening on January 19, 1990. The call came through loudspeakers blaring threats to "Kafirs" to quit or perish, from mosques throughout the Valley. Then a hell, reminiscent of the horrendous rule of Sikander 'Butshikan' was let loose against the Kashmiri Pandits. Killing, burning, looting became the order of the day. As a result, about 400,000 of them migrated from the Valley reducing their presence in Kashmir to mere 0.1% per cent of its total population. Even this 0.1 per cent is not safe. Twenty-three of them, including infants, were murdered in cold blood on the eve of Republic Day, 1998 at Wondhama Village in Srinagar district. Recently on 5th February, 2000, three Kashmiri Pandits including an eight years old girl were massacred in cold blood at Telvani village in the southern Anantnag district of Kashmir. Again on Maha Shiv Ratri (4th March, 2000) when all Kashmiri Pandits were praying for peace and prosperity, a Kashmiri Pandit woman and her husband were killed in village "Pathbug" in Dialgam area of Anantnag district. What a shame. The rest may be killed in time to come or converted to Islam. Nobody knows.

Till date about 1,500 (fifteen hundred) members of this Kashmiri Pandit community have been brutally murdered and more than 400,000 were forced out from Valley during the last decade. More than 10,000 displaced persons have died due to hostile environs and physical, psychological, disorders. About 212 temples and more than twenty four thousand (24,000) houses belonging to Kashmiri Pandits, hundreds of their business establishments, educational, cultural and religious institutions

have been destroyed with the objective of decimating all traces of the 6,000 years old civilization of this indigenous community.

Presently, approximately over 2.5 lakh Pandits of Kashmir are putting up in camps and shovels in Jammu Division of the State, with another large concentration of about 2.5 lakhs in and around Delhi. The rest of the over seven lakh strong community (post-1941 when they constituted 15 per cent of the Valley's population) are scattered throughout India and abroad. The community is trying to protect cultural and civilisational heritage even after the exile. Education has been our first priority. How long and how effectively their heritage can be protected, *Out of our Birthland,* is a matter of conjecture.

This brings me to our present which as I said earlier, is an end-product of our past. In this scenario, I would say that the first and foremost task before us now is to ensure our *Survival*. How do we survive in this dismal scenario as a distinct ethno-religious community with our cultural and civilisational heritage in tact? That should be our main concern at this time. Our future will present itself if we survive the catastrophe.

Lastly, I want to stress that we are more concerned for better future especially of our young ones rather than lamenting over the past. We have to take a step forward. The new generation has been grievously wounded in social, psychological and intellectual area. Any further delay in proper rehabilitation and the necessary aftercare will result in irreparable damage in their excellence-the watch word for "Looking Ahead".

CHAPTER 25

Kashmiri Pandits in Retrospect and Prospect

*Prof. K. Warikoo**

Kashmiri Pandits – the Indigenous people of Kashmir

The antiquity of Kashmiri Brahmins, along with other Hindu castes, is well established by archeological and historical documentary evidence. The Kashmiri Pandits are the precursors of Kashmiri Muslims who now form a majority in the valley of Kashmir. This historic transformation of far reaching importance took place as a result of introduction of Islam in Kashmir in the fourteenth century. Whereas Kashmiri Pandits are of the same ethnic stock as the Kashmiri Muslims, both sharing their habitat, language, dress, food and other habits, Kashmiri Pandits form a constituent part of the Hindu society of India on the religious plane. However, due to geophysical and eco-cultural uniqueness of the Kashmir valley, the Kashmiri Pandits have evolved their own traditions, ontology and way of life which is deeply associated rather enmeshed with the mountains and peaks, springs and waterfalls, flora and fauna, shrines and pilgrimages – all that is the essence of Kashmir. Almost every spring (*nag*), mountain peak, cave and hill in Kashmir has been a pilgrim centre for Kashmiri Pandits. Similarly, since ancient times the river Jhelum (*Vitasta*) has been an inseparable part of their daily rituals. Due to the long distance and mountain barriers, Kashmiri Pandits

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could not visit the *tirthas* (pilgrim centres) in other parts of India in early times, they discovered their own sacred sites in the valley. So the confluence of *Vitasta* (Jhelum) and Sindhu near Shadipur has been treated as Prayag, where ashes of the dead were immersed. However, some affluent sections of the community did go to Hardwar to perform this rite for their dead kith and kin. Similarly, Gangabal lake at the foothills of Harmukh was a popular place of pilgrimage like Gangotri in the U.P. Himalayas. A stream at Ishbar, near Srinagar is known as Gupt Ganga, where a high centre of Shaivism came up under the guidance of late Swami Lakshman Ji.

The most significant contribution of Kashmiri Pandits has been the exposition of Trikha philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism which synthesises the diverse currents of thought and wisdom found in all systems of ancient Indian philosophy. Earlier, Kashmiri Pandit scholars and savants had played a leading role in spreading Buddhism far and wide across the Himalayan frontiers of India in Central Asia, Tibet and China. Similarly Kashmiri Pandits made notable contribution to human civilisation in the fields of mysticism, humanism, aesthetics, art and architecture, language and literature, astrology, science and historiography. In this context, mention may be made of the contributions of Abhinavagupta, Anandvarman, Kshemendra, Kallat, Mammat, Rudrat, Jagadar Bhatt, Avtar Bhatt, Kalhana, Jonaraja, Srivara etc. In short, Kashmiri Pandits acted as the vanguard of intellectual, cultural and spiritual movements which lent a distinct identity to this ethno-religious minority of Kashmir.

Kashmiri Pandits inherit a history of tumultuous tragedies during the past seven centuries, that is after Islam became a dominant religio-political force in Kashmir. Against immense odds including forced conversions, killings and exodus of its members, the community of Kashmiri Pandits tenaciously held on to its traditions, culture and beliefs though its energy was drastically clipped. At the same time, they adjusted to changed political situation and not only learnt but also excelled in Persian language and literature. The consequent interaction between Islamic Sufi thought and Kashmir Shaivism led to the creation of a composite culture which was the hallmark of Kashmiri society and culture

until recently. Undeterred by adverse vicissitudes of history, Kashmir Pandits demonstrated:

(a) close attachment to ancestral habitat and its natural surroundings in Kashmir, which continues to be the pivot of their day to day life as well as their aspirations;

(b) preservation of their traditions, customs, cultural, spiritual and religious manifestations in the form of shrines, pilgrim centres, springs, peaks, mountains and hillocks, rivers and meadows dotting the length and breadth of Kashmir valley and which are revered most;

(c) self identification as a distinct ethno-religious and cultural group popularly known as Kashmiri Pandits – distinct from the Muslims of Kashmir. Its distinct character has been maintained by avoiding intercaste marriages with other groups. The community continues to be identified by others as Kashmiri Pandits.

Forced Displacement : Causes and Consequences

The Kashmiri Pandit community met with a great traumatic experience in the middle of fourteenth century when conversion to Islam took place on a massive scale. The process of conversion was accompanied by the superimposition of new customs over the ancient indigenous culture leading to its erosion. In a span of about 500 years (1340-1819AD) this persecuted community was forced to leave its homeland several times. Yet they made it a point to return as soon as there was some let up in religious frenzy.

Notwithstanding the assertion by Sheikh Abdullah and some recent historians that "Islam spread in Kashmir not by sword but by *Tableegh*", there is recorded evidence of forcible conversion of Kashmiri Pandits to Islam, destruction of their places of worship and their cultural heritage. Syed Ali Hamadani who entered Kashmir in 1379 AD, and who is believed to have employed relatively peaceful methods to spread his faith, himself enunciates certain principles/terms and conditions for the Muslim ruler in his dealings with the *Zimmi* (non-Muslim subjects). Some of these, as are recorded in his *Zakhirat-ul-Mulk* (Chap. 5), are:

(a) Muslim ruler shall not allow fresh construction of temples and shrines for idol worship.

(b) No repairs shall be executed to existing temples and shrines.

(c) No difficulty shall be offered to those non-Muslims who are ready to accept Islam.

(d) Non Muslims shall not ride a harnessed horse.

(e) They shall not dispose of their dead in the neighbourhood of Muslim maqbaras, nor weep or wail loudly over their dead.

It was left to Syed Mohammad Hamadani (the son of Syed Ali Hamadani) to carry out the unfinished task of his father, using violent means. The region of Sultan Sikandar and his successors is known for such atrocities. *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, a contemporaneous history of Kashmir written in 1614 by an anonymous author, most probably Syed Ali, gives a glimpse of the methods of such forcible conversion to Islam. It also gives an idea of the struggle of the Kashmiri Pandits to hold to their faith, under such terrible circumstances. It says:[1]

> "One of the big tasks completed by Malik Kaji Chak, was the massacre of infidels and polytheists of this land. It happened like this. During the government of Malik Musa Raina all the depraved heretics of this land had been converted to Islam. But with the help of some of the chiefs of this land, some of them had reverted to the customs of the infidels and polytheists. These infidels had resumed idolatry. Some of the infidels related that during the hours of offering prayers and worshipping of idols they would place a copy of the holy Quraen under their haunches to make a seat to sit upon. This idol worshipping proceeded even while they sat on the divine book. When the news and details of these doings were brought to Amir Shamsuddin Mohd. Iraqi, he summoned Malik Kaji Chak and ordered him to inflict punishment upon the infidels. Malik Kaji Chak in deference to the wishes of Amir Shamsuddin Iraqi, decided to carry out a wholesale massacre of the infidels. Their massacre was scheduled for

the days of approaching *Ashura*. Thus in year 924 A.H. (A.D. 1518), during the Asuhra about 7 to 800 infidels were put to death. Those killed were the leading personalities of the community of infidels at that time; men of substance and government functionaries. Each of them wielded influence and sway over a hunded families of other infidels and heretics. Thus the entire community of infidels in Kashmir was coerced into conversion to Islam at the point of sword".

Myth vs. Reality

While discussing the Kashmiri Pandits in retrospect, one cannot but escape the attention given to the existence of some literate Kashmiri Pandit clerks, munshis and patwaris in the Dogra raj. They have been portrayed as instruments of exploitation and this has been a common theme of the Kashmiri Muslim political, bureaucratic and intellectual elites in Kashmir to whip up passions against the community by drawing general conclusions out of isolated instances. Sheikh Abdullah quotes Lawrence to describe such Kashmiri Pandits as wielding authority and being responsible for *Begar* (forced labour) in Kashmir during the Dogra period. True that Kashmiri Pandits have looked to clerical jobs as the main means of livelihood, but such jobs were limited to a select few who could make it. Glancy Commission which was set up in early 1930s by the Maharaja of Kashmir to look into the grievances of Kashmiri Muslims particularly in matters of employment and education, found out that out of 763 gazetted appointments in the State, "Kashmiri Pandits held only 74 including 17 Pandits imported from British India". Even Glancy remarked that "it is certainly not a high proportion".[2] All others living across the length and breadth of the valley were dependent on their small land holdings for subsistence. Here I will quote Walter Lawrence[3] to amplify this statement:

"The vast majority of the Pandits belong to the Karkun clan and have usually made their livelihood in the employment of the State. But as State employment became harder to obtain and the number of the Pandits increased, the Brahmans of Kashmir sought other occupation, and many of them are in business, while others work as cooks, bakers, confectioners and tailors. A Pandit may follow any

trade or occupation except those of the cobbler, potter, corn-frier, porter, boatman, carpenter, mason or fruitseller. In 1894 many Pandits were working as daily labourers on the river embankments. Though may have taken to agriculture and many more are looking to land as a means of employment and subsistence, they would infinitely prefer to spend their lives as clerks in some office. The Pandits of the villages consider it no degradation to follow the plough and to carry manure. However, the future of city Pandits is a matter of some anxiety. They are extremely conservative and short sighted. They are deeply attached to their country, and though Kashmiri Pandits have risen to distinction in India, the large number of unemployed Brahmans of Srinagar will not seek service in the Punjab while it is possible to eke out a bare subsistence in the valley. Every city Pandit is sedulous for the education of his children".

Similarly there is a belief that Kashmiri Pandits constituted the big landholder class and were as such exploiting the poor peasantry. However, the fact is that as a result of the promulgation of Big Landed Estates Abolition Act on 13 July 1950 by late Sheikh Abdullah, it was found that 25 families owned little more than 500,000 kanals of land among themselves in Jammu and Kashmir state. Out of this 1,52,924 kanals were held in ownership in Kashmir, of which only 23,600 kanals were owned by 3 Kashmiri Pandits – Shyam Sundar Lal Dhar, Balkak Dhar and Raja Upendra Krishan Kaul. So apart from these 3 Kashmiri Pandit jagirdars, the whole community had a generally lower middle class character, with those in the villages living even more difficult and frugal life. During the nineteenth and most part of twentieth century, Kashmiri Pandits living in the valley have lived a life of simplicity, patience and contentment. Pandit Anand Kaul's statement that "the Kashmiri Pandit conceals poverty, trying to make his figure presentable much more than his narrow circumstances permit,"[4] aptly describes the actual situation of Kashmiri Pandits.

Seven centuries of religious, political, and economic persecution had turned the Kashmiri Pandits into a minority community in their own homeland in Kashmir. As per the 1941 Census, the population of Kashmiri Pandits was 76,868 as against

the Muslim population of 17,28,705 in Kashmir.[5] As such they constituted little below 5 per cent of the total population in the Muslim majority area of Kashmir. To this must be added the emigree Kashmiri Pandits who had settled mainly in Lahore, Delhi, Awadh, Calcutta and elsewhere in India. These emigees adapted to their new environs in different ways lending different dimensions to their socio-political outlook. As Henny Sender puts it, "the emigree Kashmiri Pandits lost their sense of identification or unity with those who had remained behind in Kashmir."[6] Whereas "they regarded the Kashmiris of Kashmir as inferior, those in the valley regarded the departed as different." The emigree Kashmiri Pandits, in order to compensate for their "felt status as outsiders", appeared to have over-adapted to their host environment. Thus we find, the Kashmiri Pandits settled in north India particularly Awadh, subsumed themselves in the Persianised Urdu culture that surrounded them, feeling more comfortable and at ease in the company of local Muslim nobility and cultural elite. This interaction gave rise to a new socio-political ethos among these Kashmiri Pandits – a mindset which was influenced by the Muslim culture and views. Though this development put these Kashmir Pandits in a position to play a positive role as a bridge between different sections of Indian society, it also facilitated the task of Indian Muslim political and intellectual elite not only to safeguard their socio-political situation in the aftermath of partition in India but also to secure a series of affirmative government actions to fortify the religious, cultural, linguistic and political identity of Muslim minority in India.

As against the evolution of this hybrid culture in Awadh, the Kashmiri Pandits living in the valley and also in adjoining Punjab were closer to roots. It would not be out of place to mention that, Shiv Narain Raina Shamim, who was the first Indian lawyer to be named as full Advocate by the British (Arthur Reid, the then Chief Justice) and who was later recommended by William Clark for a Rai Bahadurship, was clear and unambiguous when he wrote, "I see Hinduism as part of the Kashmiri tradition and part of their future."[7] Similarly, enlightened and progressive Kashmiri Pandits in the valley started initiating various movements for social reform and educational development. It was in 1905 that with the efforts of Pandit Bala Kaul and some luminaries of Theosophical Society led by Annie Besant, the Hindu

College was started in Srinagar, which later came to be known as Sri Pratap college.[8] Another group of Kashmiri Pandits started Women's Welfare Trust in 1926, which run 10 girls schools and 1 Seva Sadan (Adult Women's School).[9] Soon this Trust extended its activities to Jammu and opened a school for Harijan girls there. That more than 1000 girls were reading in these schools in 1930s, is a landmark achievement in the field of girls' education at that time. More importantly, these Kashmiri Pandits were dictated by high principles of service and patriotism without any consideration of caste or creed. They did not denominate these institutions after their community or creed, unlike other Muslim institutions. In 1928 a movement to combat the social evil of ban on widow remarriage was launched. So much so, widow remarriage was legalised by an amendment in the State law in 1930.[10]

Pandit Kashyap Bandhu was one of the first Kashmiri Pandits to have joined Arya Samaj. He initiated a movement to introduce. *Saree* among Kashmiri Pandit women to replace the *pheran*. Kashyap Bandhu's writings in his paper *Desh* galvanised the people. Similarly Shridhar Kaul Dullo, then Inspector of Schools in Ladakh did a lot to ameliorate the situation of poor and illiterate Ladakhis. On the political front, the Kashmiri Pandits were clear about the need for association of Kashmiri Muslim political movement against autocracy with the Indian national movement, then led by Congress. In spite of the sad episode of 13 July 1931 when hundreds of Hindu shops and houses in Maharaj Ganj, Vicharnag and Nowshera were looted leading to death of 3 and injuries to 163 persons, the Kashmiri Pandits started associating themselves with the then Kashmir Muslim political leaders. Kashyap Bandhu, Prem Nath Bazaz, Jia Lal Kilam, Sham Lal Saraf, Shambu Nath Peshin along with Sardar Budh Singh joined hands with Sheikh Abdullah, Maulana Saeed, G.M. Sadiq, Mirza Afzal Beg and Mian Ahmad Yar to "give a non-communal direction" to the movement for responsible government in Kashmir, so that it "was not confined to any particular community or section of society".[11] In September 1938 as many as 60 educated and prominent Kashmiri Pandit public workers went to jail and suffered alongside their Muslim counterparts.[12] Prem Nath Bazaz corresponded with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru informing them about the need to bring Kashmir closer to Indian

political movement at that time. Contribution of Kashmiri Pandits to the transformation of Muslim Conference into National Conference and subsequent social and political movements including Quit Kashmir agitation, formation of Naya Kashmir programme etc. cannot be quantified. In fact, Sheikh Abdullah has acknowledged the role of these Kashmiri Pandits in this struggle.

The destiny of the Kashmiri Pandit indigenous minority of Kashmir took a turn for the worse in the post-1947 era when Kashmir turned into a zone of conflict between India and Pakistan. Whereas the Indian Constitution provided special safeguards in the form of Article 370 to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, it failed to take cognizance of the precarious situation of the ethno-religious minority in Kashmir as the local administration practised parochialism based on the concept of providing more opportunities to people of the largest religious denomination. With the result, the minuscule minority of Kashmiri Pandits became a victim of discrimination in political, economic, educational and cultural spheres in the otherwise secular, democratic and federal political system of post-independent India. The necessity of survival forced the members of this community to search livelihood outside Kashmir. Thus began a fresh erosion of their territorial base in their ancient land of birth. As a community committed to upholding values of culture and civilization, the Kashmiri Pandits have spent all their energy in attaining education which instead of being a boon became a bane. This was because Kashmiri Pandits focussed all their attention to acquire literacy and higher education to the extent possible within their means thereby neglecting other avenues and trades.

Eruption of armed insurgency and terrorism and rise of militarised form of Islamic fundamentalism in Kashmir since late 1989, came as a disaster for about three lakh Kashmiri Pandits living in the valley of Kashmir at that time. During the past ten years or so, the phenomenon of terrorism in Kashmir has manifested in coercive intimidation of civil population, introduction of radical Islam is society and culture, violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of religion, expression and life, destruction of properties, ethno-religious cleansing of Hindu minorities, hostage-taking, attacks on security forces,

mines and bomb blasts, subverting the legitimate civil and political authority in the State and undermining the democratic and pluralistic socio-political order based on the principles of equality and peaceful co-existence.[13] During the first phase of militancy in Kashmir, the Islamist militant groups strived to "bring structural changes at cultural levels of Kashmir society",[14] seeking to Islamicise the socio-political set-up in the valley. There were open calls for establishment of an Islamic order. Various Islamist groups like *Jamat-i-Islami* and its militant wing *Hizbul Mujahideen*, women's wing *Dukhtaran-i-Millat, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, Allah Tigers, Jamiat-ul-Ulemmi* Islam etc. proclaimed the objective of their struggle as Islamicisation of socio-political and economic setup, merger of Kashmir with Pakistan, unification of *Ummah* and establishment of an Islamic Caliphate.[15] The Muslim extremists launched a malicious campaign against the Kashmiri Hindus through periodic write ups in local newspapers and through sermons in mosques. And final ultimatum was given to this minority community through local press on 14 April 1990 asking them to leave the valley within two days or face retribution and death.[16] The liquidation of Kashmiri Pandits, liberal and nationalist intellectuals, social and cultural activists, was described necessary to rid the valley of its un-Islamic elements.

Throughout the summer of 1989 and after, the Islamic militant organisations used many Urdu newspapers in Kashmir for publishing materials derogatory to the Hindus, their history, customs and traditions, with an object of spreading hatred and disinformation about this ancient indigenous community amongst the common Muslim masses in the valley. Simultaneously, several Kashmiri Pandits were served with notices asking them to leave the valley. Generally such notices were pasted on the doors or delivered in dark hours of the night. Some shopkeepers and businessmen even received threatening phone calls. This was followed by identifying prominent social and cultural activists, intellectuals, lawyers and young men of the beleaguered Kashmiri Pandit community and preparing the 'hit lists' of such targetted persons, who were denounced and openly threatened. These 'hit lists' were often displayed on the electric poles in the mohallas and squares. Then followed kidnappings, torture and select killings. The first serious blow to the community came with the assassination on 14 September 1989 of Tikka Lal Taploo, a senior

advocate of Jammu and Kashmir High Court and a widely respected social and political activist. The next day, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front owned the responsibility of killing Taploo.[17] Taploo's death was followed by the broad day murder of the former Sessions Judge, Nila Kanth Ganjoo in the busy market of Hari Singh High Street in Srinagar on 4 November 1989. Another prominent advocate, social worker, intellectual and journalist of the community, Prem Nath Bhat was shot dead in the heart of Anantnag town in south Kashmir on 27 December 1989.

These killings accompanied by the vilification campaign and the circulation of 'hit lists' targetting the prominent Kashmiri Pandit social and cultural workers, intellectuals, government officials and other, came as a disaster for about 300,000 Kashmiri Pandits living in the valley at that time. More than one thousand members of this indigenous minority community were brutally murdered, and the rest were forced to leave their hearth and habitat.[18] Besides, several hundred who were reportedly kidnapped are also believed to have been killed. The terrorists resorted to most brutal means of killing, by hanging, strangulation, beheading, skinning alive, and dismemberment of limbs. The forced displacement of almost entire Kashmiri Pandit indigenous minority, who were terrorised, killed and hounded out by the Islamist terrorists, presents a classic case of ethnic-religious cleansing with long-term implications for the composite socio-cultural set up and secular polity in Kashmir. These terrorists have resorted to targetted killings of even those few remanants of Kashmiri Pandits who could not move out of the valley due to various constraints. On March 21, 1997 seven such Kashmiri Pandits were forcibly taken out of their hearths in Sangrampura village of Budgam district and gunned down. Another 23 members of this minuscule minority including 10 men, 9 women and 2 infants were huddled together on a dark cold night of 26 January 1998, at Wandhama village in Ganderbal and mowed down by the Islamist terrorists with a clear objective of ensuring that Kashmir valley is cleansed of its non-Muslim minorities and the State is not allowed to restore its secular and composite socio-cultural set up.

As per official statistics, 49,760 displaced families from Kashmir are registered as migrants, details of which are given as under:[19]

(a) No. of Registered Migrant Families living in Jammu Division = 28,561

Out of this, 25,215 families are Kashmiri Hindus, 1803 Sikhs and 1468 Muslims.

(b) No. of Registered Migrant Families outside Jammu and Kashmir State = 21,199

Delhi	-	19,339
Himachal Pradesh	-	115
Haryana	-	523
Chandigarh	-	206
Punjab	-	100
Uttar Pradesh	-	500
Madhya Pradesh	-	40
Karnataka	-	60
Goa	-	140
Kerala	-	5
Maharashtra	-	124
Rajasthan	-	47

These figures, however, exclude more than 10,000 families who have not been able to register as migrants due to their immobility, ill health, old age, official apathy and other factors. As such around 60,000 Kashmiri Pandit families comprising this entire community of more than 3,00,000 people have been forced out from their ancient indigenous habitat in Kashmir by terrorists and religious extremists. This minority community is agonising in its tenth year of displacement, which has resulted in loss of their land, property, homes, educational and employment opportunities, besides leading to breakup of families, social and cultural community ties. Their forced displacement has had devastating consequences on the socio-psychological, physical, health and demographic profile of the Kashmiri Pandit community which is on the verge of extinction.

Continued state of homelessness, deprivation and insecurity has pushed this displaced community to a state of continuing chronic stress. This has led to deterioration in the overall physical and mental health of the community. High death and low birth rates, ageing, diseases like diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, tuberculosis, heart attacks and strokes have overtaken these hapless people. More than 8000 displaced Kashmiri Pandits have died during their ten years of displacement due to exposure to hostile environs, snake bites, heat strokes, heart, nervous and other ailments. Dr. Jitendra Singh, a leading physician and diabetologist of Jammu, has reported wide prevalence of diabetes mellitus and high blood pressure amongst the displaced Kashmiri Pandits due to continuing chronic stress. According to him, people at the younger age of 35-40 have got diabetes, which has adversely affected the productive years of life of this community. "My study points to the existence of diabetes in almost each family of displaced Kashmiri Pandits - which is of epidemiological proportions. This displaced community which has survived homelessness, militancy and economic deprivation now faces the threat of biological extinction through the ravages of diabetes with all its accompanying impediments including impotence,"[20] says Dr. Singh. Another study carried out by Neha Kachroo amongst 110 families living in the Government Camp at Muthi, Phase II, Jammu revealed that 60 per cent of the respondents suffered from hypertension, psychological and serious respiratory illnesses.[21] There has been a five fold increase in the number of tuberculosis cases.[22] Besides, malaria and diarrhoea was found common among the camp inmates due to poor sanitation and drinking water arrangements. Yet another survey of 498 families (2,345 persons) living in Muthi camp I and II, conducted by the NSS Unit of Government MAM Camp College, Jammu (in April 1998) revealed that there were 143 deaths in this camp as against 222 births during exile.[23] Besides, 589 cases of serious ailments like asthma, diabetes, depression, neurotic, heart and other diseases were reported amongst this cluster, which is considerably high.[24]

Another major problem encountered by the displaced community has been the loss of their immovable properties, houses, shops, agricultural land, orchards, trees and livestock, which they left behind. More than 30,000 houses belonging to

Kashmiri Pandits, hundreds of their business establishments, educational, cultural and religious institutions have been destroyed with the object of decimating all traces of the 5000 years old indigenous minority community. According to Ghulam Mohammad Sofi, a renowned Kashmiri journalist and editor of daily *Srinagar Times* "nearly 32,000 Kashmiri Pandits' houses have been burnt since 1991."[25] Most of the house, shops or cultural/ educational establishments belonging to the displaced Kashmiri Pandits, have been damaged, destroyed, burnt or forcibly occupied by the terrorists with a clear objective of foreclosing all possibilities of the return of these people to their homeland after normalcy. The case of the Kashmiri Pandits who belonged to rural Kashmir and who were dependent for their livelihood on their agricultural land, orchards and cattle is worse. Most of their land stands encroached and orchards destroyed. According to an estimate prepared by the Kashmiri Migrant Fruit Growers Association, about 9,600 orchardists had about 3,600 hectares of orchards of apples, walnuts, almonds etc.[26] Before the exodus, they had in their possession about 5,00,000 apple, 1,30,000 walnut, 25,000 almond and 15,000 other fruit trees, which yielded an annual yield of 15,000 metric tonnes of apples, 3,200 mt. of walnuts, 3,75,000 kgs. of almonds and 30,000 boxes of other fruits, with a total value of about 34.42 crores of rupees.[27] During the past ten years of their displacement, they have not only been incurring a recurring loss of this revenue, most of their orchards stand either destroyed or encroached. Similar has been the case with residential houses and agricultural land, which has been occupied forcibly in the absence of their owners. In most such cases mutation of land and properties has been done fraudulently. All this has led to a process of distress sale of their properties by the Kashmiri Pandits displaced persons. The enactment of the Jammu and Kashmir Migrant Immovable Property (Preservation, Protection and Restraint on Distress Sales) Act, 1997 has also failed to check the prevalence of fraudulent mutations and distress sale, due to the failure of State government to protect such properties. So much so, the State government informed the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly that about 635 houses and 2000 kanals of land of migrants were under illegal occupation.[28] The State government informed the National Human Rights Commission that it had completed the job of making inventories of the immovable property left behind in the Kashmir valley by

the displaced persons, and that the "total number of structures belonging to the migrants is 16,979 out of which 5,870 structures have been gutted or damaged."[29] Clearly the list prepared by the State government functionaries has been underestimated in a big way to legitimise the fraudulent mutation and forcible occupation of properties owned by the Kashmiri Pandit displaced persons. Ironically no mention has been made of hundreds of thousands of apple, walnut and almond trees besides poplars, willows etc. belonging to Kashmiri Pandits which have been felled and sold as timber during the past ten years. This is despite the admission of the State Forest Minister, Mohammad Ramzan that "an estimated three lakh conifer, deodar and kail trees have been felled and smuggled from the forests in Jammu and Kashmir by the terrorists during this period."[30] Given the magnitude of the problem it becomes imperative for the National Human Rights Commission, which is seized of the matter, to set up an independent task force to look into the matter and ensure that the wrongs committed are remedied by restoring their lost properties to the hapless displaced persons and securing adequate compensation/relief to them.

A community which once excelled in higher education has been forced to abandon the same in its grim battle for survival. According to a survey conducted by Neha Kachroo among 110 families in the Muthi Camp-II at Jammu, 12.72% of the displaced families have not been able to send their children to school due to financial difficulties.[31] These children work in some local factory or nearby shops. Only 37.83% of the displaced students were going to the Camp school which had inadequate accommodation, furniture, library, laboratory and other facilities.[32] Inordinate delay in the conduct of examinations and then in release of results by the University of Kashmir has been another traumatic experience of the displaced students camped in Jammu.[33] This has resulted in loss of at least two years of their academic and professional careers. And to further compound their problems, the Kashmiri Pandit displaced community has been suffering from lack of employment opportunities. At the time of their displacement, there were around 2,000 Kashmiri Pandit employees out of about 3,00,000 working with the State government and its undertakings. More than 800 will get retired by the end of year 2000 AD. As against this, fresh recruitments among the community have been

negligible. The State government has made about 40,000 recruitments during the past few years, out of which not more than 300 have gone to Kashmiri Pandits. According to a survey of 498 families at Muthi Camp-I and II there were 669 claimants for immediate employment (as on 8 April 1998) out of which 53% were graduates and 40% postgraduates, all in the age group of 20 to 40 years.[34] This policy of denial of employment avenues to the displaced persons has been wrecking havoc on the very survival of this community.

This displaced community has thus been living with the most traumatic experience of the destruction of its social fabric, economic, familial and environmental relationships and infrastructure. The adverse social, psychological and health consequences suffered by this 5000 years old ancient community have been enormous, particularly due to loss of their distinct territory, ethno-cultural heritage and identity. This displaced community is a victim of sinister design unleashed by Pakistan sponsored terrorists to deprive the ancient and indigenous Kashmiri Pandits of their right to the territorial locus in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, so that its social and political order is altered to a mono-ethnic Islamist extremist agenda. This minority community has been deprived of its ancient habitat, language and culture in Kashmir valley. Given the condition of the displaced Kashmiri Pandits living in forced exile in various parts of India and also due to lack of attention by previous Kashmiri Pandit emigrees to the preservation and dissemination of their mother tongue, the Kashmiri Pandit community is fast losing its language and culture. Since language is the most potent cultural marker providing for group identity, concerted steps need to be taken urgently to promote the usage of Kashmiri language as mother tongue by all Kashmiri Pandit households. More importantly, Kashmiri Pandits (whether old or new migrants) should ensure that their numbers are properly enumerated in the forthcoming Census-2001. This can be achieved only if all Kashmiri Pandits living across the length and breadth of India record their mother tongue as Kashmiri and religion as Hindu. At the governmental level, central government and its institutions like Sahitya Akademi should recognise Devnagri as alternate script for Kashmiri language, so that the ethni-religious minority of Kashmiri Pandits is not deprived of the patronage given by these

established cultural institutions to Kashmiri language and literature.

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CHAPTER 26

Kashmiri Pandits in a Perspective

A.K. Kaul

Many organisations and groups are seeking to evolve a common approach to the future of our community. The present state of the community which some call 'dispersed, restless, homeless and rudderless' is not a new phenomenon but the one which we have faced many a time. It is, therefore, necessary that the community should first seek to draw appropriate lessons from its history before attempting or evolving a common approach. The history of Kashmir is almost co-terminus with the history of Kashmiri Pandits. History has revealed that members of our community are intrinsically lone hunters, occasionally in packs but never as a group. Kashmiri Pandit is a highly individualised person who has strived to seek a place in the sun solely on his own efforts. Since his entire resource was built on acquiring knowledge and education, he had, as of necessity, to be in constant competition even with his fellow community members. Psychologically he abhorred taking part in a common struggle apprehending a dilution of his personal and family interests. Like an Englishman, he had converted his home into a castle.

All this has to be appreciated in the historical background of Kashmiri Pandits who were in minority even when Kashmir was under the Hindu rule. The general impression that all Hindus in Kashmir were Pandits is not correct. In fact, there existed other castes who were much larger in numbers. A fair number of other castes who converted to Islam did not pose much problem for the

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proselyters. Persuasion, political/administrative pressure and allurements were generally applied with fair amount of success to convert the non-Pandits. The fact, however, remains that the Pandit resolutely withstood the attempts at converting him. And there the whole rub started. The rulers of the day, egged on by the Syyeds, used all coercive methods including physical elimination to have the Pandit to convert. Quite a few of his compatriots were killed and a large number, purely as a close family decision, decided to quit the valley and seek refuge elsewhere. Legend had it that at one time only eleven families remained in the valley.

Ever since the advent of Islam in Kashmir there have been many instances of Kashmiri Pandit exodus and return. However, since 1947 the exodus has been one sided affair with Pandits leaving in small numbers for seeking livelihood. This regular and continuous exodus too has been based on individual decisions, and no community or group approach has ever been evolved. The first ever, yet disastrous, effort at community scale action in recent times was in 1967 when a Pandit girl, Parmeshwari, was converted to Islam and then married to a Muslim boy. The conversion had provided an excuse to Kashmiri Pandits to give vent to long pent up feelings of discrimination and injustice. The State government left no stone unturned to deal heavily with the Pandit protestors, mostly young boys and girls. The Central government, however, took due notice of the protest and no less a person than the then Home Minister, Y.B. Chavan, rushed to Srinagar to negotiate with the leaders of the agitation. Somewhere during the negotiations the overwhelming individual aspirations of the community negotiators came to the fore. It is believed that some of the negotiators were offered personal allurements in exchange for withdrawal of the agitation. The sole outcome of these negotiations was the setting up of Gajendragadkar Commission which, in its report, delved more on devolution of power between the people of Jammu province and Kashmir valley. The demands of the Pandits found no mention, at all, in the report. A great effort thus ended in a great disaster. Similarly, in 1986 the separatists, in an organised move, torched and looted Pandit property and religious places in the Anantnag district. A team of Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi, who toured the valley after the riots found to their dismay that Pandits living in places other than Anantnag

district were hardly concerned at what had happened in that district. All that they would say is that they too had heard that some thing had happened in Anantnag area. Protest marches were taken out in Delhi but not in Srinagar or Baramulla.

In spite of the fact that in 1989-90 there was mass exodus of the Pandits following killings and threat of killing, yet each family and individual decided on the exodus entirely on its own. No community effort or decision was made or taken. Brother did not inform brother, friend did not confide in friend, about the decision to quit. Invariably, the individual or the family would, with a suitcase or two, quietly move out of their homes during night hours and make for the bus stand. Early morning they would avail of any transport to reach Jammu.

There have been very cogent historical reasons which have turned a Pandit highly self-centered. His own and his family's survival is paramount to him. The deep sense of persecution dogging him for centuries has made him look askance at any community or group action or programme. It is, in this context, that we observed the mushrooming of many organisations each claiming to be representing the whole community.

While trying to forge some united approach this background should be kept in view. The fact remains that with a highly developed sense of survival the Kashmiri Pandit is fully capable of looking after his own interests, as also of his family. He has the uncanny knack of adapting to new situations and this he does admirably. Let us not burden him with a milestone of unity which he will inevitably throw out. He is not looking for 'direction'. He seeks a little assistance. Let us discuss some of the immediate problems the community is facing:

Return to Kashmir - The individual or the family left Kashmir entirely on its own judgment. Similarly he will return only if his judgment permits it. No common agenda on this matter can be evolved. There are reports that a large number of Pandits have already sold away their property in the valley. What interest can these families have now to return. Why should our youth return when job opportunities in the State are bleak.

Evolving a Common Approach - All efforts at 'Organising ourselves so that we do not talk in multiple voices' are bound to come-a-cropper. History, past and present, is witness to the fact that even at best of times we have not been united. It makes no sense to break our heads on this count. Even without seeking unity we can do lot for our community.

Preserving Culture - Retaining of culture is also an individual effort. The example of earlier exodees who, interestingly, call themselves 'Old Kashmiris' shows that they are still proud of being Kashmiri Pandits. They continue to follow certain old customs and traditions although they have lost touch with the Kashmiri language. After such a long absence form their roots, they still do aspire for marriages of their wards within their community. Maintaining contacts with the roots is, again, an individual effort and cannot be superimposed.

Discouraging Marriages outside the Community - There is no method known or available 'to ensure that our children marry within the community'. This amounts to refraining our children from mixing or interacting with non-Kashmiris in their schools, colleges, professional institutions, working places and multiracial social functions. This was, *per se*, possible only as long as we lived in the valley. Nothing can be more ludicrous than to tell your ward not to be attracted to the opposite sex if he or she happens to be a non-Kashmiri. Is this possible in the 21st century? Can it be done? The smug satisfaction, however, is that an overwhelming majority still prefer to keep within the community.

The Kashmiri Language - As regards 'learn the language and retain the customs and traditions', all that one can say is that we should not lose our sleep over it. The Kashmiri language has no use, whatsoever, to the youth either in their academics or in seeking employment of what earthly use will be this language to him? It is a common sight to see that even in families where people are seeped in older traditions, their common family language is Hindi or Hindustani. That is the compulsion of the times and none

can stop that. At best an institute for development of Kashmiri can be set up as a means to preserve our heritage. It is a historical fact that Kashmiri has never been used as a medium of education or as court language even in the golden periods of Hindu rule. It was either the Sanskrit with Sharda script or Persian and now Urdu. Our customs and traditions were, by and large fostered by the 'guruji' class whose tribe is dwindling fast. Members of the community are aware how difficult it is nowadays to obtain the services of a 'Guruji'. If we are losing the 'Guruji' we are, simultaneously, losing a part of our customs and traditions. As it is, a Kashmiri Pandit who was once an ardent Shaivite is slowly getting Vaishnovised. Large number of our community members have become vegetarians, and non-vegetarians do not cook meat on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Giving a silent go by to Shaivism the Pandit now follows the tenets of Santoshi Mata, Ramakrishana and Sai Baba. There is a gnawing dilution of our customs, traditions and philosophy. All this because we got 'Indianised'. Imagine families observing 'Gaada Bhata' with Kheer or Halwa. This may be our practical response to the changed circumstances.

There was a time when our livelihood depended solely on government employment except for a few landlords and fewer traders. There has been a total change in the outlook and youth now hardly opt for government jobs. A sizeable number of our youth have found gainful employment and avocations even outside the frontiers of India. The availability of economic opportunities has to be taken into consideration while deliberating on the question of return to the valley. The fact of migration on economic grounds is more potent than any other consideration. It is not suggested, even for a moment, that we should give up our right to return but we should not, at the same time, overlook the exigencies of the future. We should leave the decision to each individual while collectively hold on to our right to return to our roots.

Very few of us have been talking of our duties, liabilities and aspirations as citizens of India. Moreover, we have not only been an integral part of the Hindu (real Indian) civilization but

have significantly contributed to its evolution. Unfortunately we have tended to equate India with the government of the time. This is a wrong approach. In spite of our physical suffering and mental trauma we cannot escape the responsibility of strengthening the great Indian civilization.

I believe that organisations like the KECSS should rise to the occasion and evolve various ways and methods of generating a process of persuit of excellence. It should ponder over the finer aspects of our way of living, philosophy, including history and sciences, and thus attempt to evolve a higher human being. Fortunately, we have an excellent base material for that. A highly evolved Kashmiri Pandit, though grossly individualistic in his outlook, can be a great asset to the community and the nation. Let us play the role of a midwife to the reemergence of Indian civilization as a potent force for human progress.

CHAPTER 27

Kashmiri Pandits and Modernism

*Dwarka Nath Munshi**

The arrival of the new millennium 2000 marks a distinct dividing line between the old and the modern. The very mention of Y2k which symbolized this divide sent waves of sensation forcing countless new adjustments of varying degrees world-over. The computer, which now rules the world had itself to become Y2k compliant to maintain its performance.

This may sound a light banter, but the fact remains that suddenly even the 20th century which closed only the other day feels distant. Its first half represented imperialism, bondage, destructive wars, massive upheavals and revolutions. This yielded place, in the second half, generally to unparalleled scientific and technological triumphs as well as tribulations of, for instance, the long-drawn cold war which tested the nerves and sapped the energies and resources of most nations.

The new millennium is expected, as everyone prays and hopes for, to usher in genuine liberation and interdependent and active globalization in a relatively peaceful atmosphere, and cooperation and rapid progress for prosperity and more equitable opportunity. It seems the time is steadily turning favourable for such an international scene. This is notwithstanding the enormous stockpiles of destructive weapons and their continued production, which may perhaps remain unused if only because of the fear of

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the sharp tongue cutting its own throat. In short the global perspective has been changing to peace and progress.

As for ourselves, the Kashmiri Pandits, in the aftermath of the huge political upheaval of the last decade, events, as we all know too well, have altered the perspective with stunning rapidity. We were driven out of home on to harsh new actualities. We found ourselves friendless and resourceless and knew not what to do. More importantly we had grown soft and slaves to ease and indolence, being content with the present and hardly ever seeking new avenues and opportunities to march in step with the ever-changing modern world. That heightened the impact of the misfortune. It has taken us some effort and time to adjust to the new circumstances.

Significantly the impact was relative to the individual or a family's capacity and acceptance of adjustment and flexibility. In the wider sense of the term it is the degree of flexibility, from the prevalent or existing practices and preferences, systems and dogmas in our day-to-day life, our values and beliefs, traditions and rituals, to their current relevance which is a broad measure of modernism. History and emotion alone do not provide the stimulus for anything to develop and become meaningful and purposeful.

At the same time modernism viewed superficially is sometimes mockingly referred to as "apeism", of going blindly the western way. Often it is being equated with being Anglicized or Americanized. That no doubt assumes some aptness in matters such as aping the apparel, idiom, consumerism, irreverence or lamentably, permissiveness. Falling into such a trap is a risk anytime and has to be guarded against. Yet we have to recognize that essentially "Westernisation" is only the reference point and not literally modernism. Further, I would hold that modernity is not mere abstract notions culled from books, fashion magazines and such other resources but rather those wrested from a deeper understanding of the problems and prospects and options available.

Take for example our community's occupation-cum-work preferences, our education and training. Historically, our

preferences had been almost exclusively of obtaining general courses education and formal degrees and then move into the choked and narrow avenues of what is called the 'Sarkari Naukri'. Fortunately, over the recent past we have been moving away steadily from there into promising and lucrative professions and to self-employment skills according to one's aptitudes, capabilities, opportunities and sundry resources. This is strengthened by our community being prepared for and embracing with enthusiasm locational mobility from the ancestral and traditional homes to adventurous thrusts into places and environs hitherto unknown to us. I would not characterize this as a rejection of the existing but a resilience to experimentation and obvious utility and relevance.

Again, I would resist to characterize all these changing attitudes as flowing from our misfortune of forced exodus. No doubt it has been a barbarity. But it was our ingenuity that we worked and converted it into happy opportunity defeating the very soul of the enemy. We must keep it up and going. Secondly, the world is at once shrinking and expanding what with e-mail and internet and website bringing a world of knowledge and information right into the living room and opening up countless opportunities for those who are ready to take them. We must remember that at this stage of our history we are a community which is simultaneously in the process of formation, assimilation and renewal. It is crucial, therefore, that we do not lose any opportunity, for it will not return as someone else will certainly take the one we miss.

It is not patting our own backs to say that Kashmiri Pandits are generally a gifted lot. This has been widely admitted. We see splendid examples of it everyday and in almost all fields of activity. It will be unfortunate however if such a feeling generates complacence. The world of today, and increasingly of tomorrow, is one of intense and even fierce competition in every aspect of our lives. That makes it imperative for everyone of us to keep running, faster and faster if only to keep to the same place. Which again leads one inexorably to seek and achieve excellence. Here too we have to understand that excellence in today's modern society does not lie only in academics (e.g. secure 100 per cent marks in say chemistry or geography) which, as we have just

seen, has been the prime concern of our community and is inscribed in our consciousness. Excellence lies as much in the meekest physical labour and non-academic areas as in the high profile art or science or any other intellectual fields. In another manner of speaking, excellence is what brings joy and pride from within the doer and recognition and prosperity from without.

That leads me to say excellence should be our community's identity in the modern idiom. "There goes excellence" should go up the exclaim when others see us and define our community's identity, singly and collectively.

CHAPTER 28

The New Millennium and the Kashmiri Pandits

*R.N. Kaul**

We have just seen the end of the last decade of the twentieth century and a few months of a new millennium, which offers a new threshold for introspection by the Kashmir Pandit community. It is, therefore, imperative that the community that has suffered a debacle in the past decade, do take a critical and objective view of the situation, its manifestation, its dimensions and make a thorough analysis of the past, so as to take appropriate steps to safeguard the future. The community members would want to know, keenly, where have the Kashmiri Pandits been, where do they stand today and where are they likely to go from there?

Such a retrospective review would necessitate an in-depth study, into the sufferings faced by the community, their response to the challenges of militancy and migration, and to what extent the response was appropriate and effective. This study should expose the strengths and weakenesses of the community, its organizations, and identify areas of success and failure, each to what degree of impact, on their short term plans and long term programmes.

Since 1989, various seminars, workshops and conferences have debated the problems and made recommendations. A survey of these recommendations needs to be done now, with a view to

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examining what was implemented in the past, with or without modifications and what bears relevance, wholly or partially, in the new millennium's first decade.

The retrospective review, (seminar or workshop) could be conducted in different ways on the following format.

(i) The review group (RG) should consist of 20-25 members - (outstanding and experienced persons) which would include a socio-economist, a constitutional expert (J&K and Indian Constitutions), a senior journalist, a scientist/ technologist, academician, specialist in political science, select heads of Kashmiri Pandit organizations in India and abroad, especially from U.S.A. and U.K.

(ii) The group should be free to adopt a procedure for its working and would be authorised to examine expert witnesses and documents, if necessary.

(iii) The RG would be given the aims and objectives and terms of reference, based on agreed background paper and a time frame for preparing recommendations.

(iv) The report of the RG would include recommendations for action, stage by stage.

(v) The community can then safely chart new directions, discard unproductive suggestions and adopt a graduated proposal for action, on all matters in their best overall interests, correlated public relation action would follow stage-wise.

My book entitled the "Wail of Kashmir" raises some pertinent questions about the Kashmiri Pandit's past and future. To answer these questions I would like to quote the following extracts from the book (pp. 193-194) :

"Admittedly, this is no time to harp on the past and merely look backward. This is also no occasion for self-flagellation for past mistakes. Recrimination will lead them nowhere. Past indifference and disunity should strengthen their resolve to seek and create a better future for all in Kashmir, despite very heavy odds."

"In this difficult and trying time, the community needs to forcefully demonstrate sagacity, farsightedness, recognition of realities, absolute unity and unselfish leadership. Repeat unselfish leadership. They need to introspect deeply and rekindle a spirit of selflessness and community feeling and revive shared social, economic and political faith which alone would protect their future."

Time is also opportune to discard degenerated social customs and rites, practiced in abysmal ignorance of true religious significance and traditions and in utter disregard of eternal truths so that the weaker sections of the community will be saved from social and economic ruin. The conscience of its members must be aroused to pursue social reforms and eliminate wanton waste and vulgar display from their way of life."

The problems of migrants are spread over three main spheres or vistas which I call the 3 Rs of Kashmiri migration, and include Relief (immediate and long term), Rehabilitation and Return to the Valley,

Dealing with the sphere of return first, a question arises what would influence a migrant to return? It might be useful here to adopt the arguments in the *Wail of Kashmir* book (pp. 231-232) quoted below:

"The migrant problems were characterised only by drift, dither and delay. While for the individual migrant suffering continued unabated without light at the end of a long and dark tunnel, his hopes of return to his home and hearth dimmed. The apathy the refugee confronts is abysmal and is classical of medieval times. What sort of return he could or would have and when, nobody knows, nor is anyone able to give him any hope."

"Without going into specific details, it may be fair and useful to recognise what could influence a migrant to return and resettle in the Valley. An assured safety and security for himself, his family and property, would naturally be his core concern, basic to other necessary requirements. These would come without the broad ambit of housing, employment avenues, entry into the educational, technical and scientific institutions and, of course, religious

freedom. For housing, he would need restoration and repairs to his home, shop etc. to make these habitable with grants in aid, for repairs. For employment he would expect to be handed over his demitted job or an equivalent and for professionals and businessmen adequate facilities for self-employment. For the exercise of religious freedom, he would expect his religious property to be returned without any encroachment and repaired for use."

"The need for a single window for addressing migrant problems in a separate department is obviously important. It would not only build confidence, but help in speedy rehabilitation and return. To summarise, the Central and State governments must identify and activate permanent solutions to the problem of the migration of the Pandits from Kashmir, establish credible means and activate concrete plans for making voluntary return a realistic option."

Coming back to the vista of the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley, we do not seem to have precise statistics of the migrants living in Jammu province and outside in India, as well as, of those who continue to live in Kashmir. In order to prepare a profile of those who are likely to return to the Valley as and when, conditions prevail for them to exercise the option of return, these statistics would help in preparing a profile of the returnees and to establish assistance programmes, accordingly.

Presumably, the highest priority would be for the camp inmates, who are living under wretched and inhuman conditions and enabling them to go back soonest, to live in safety and dignity in their homes. Those who return, would need to have an assurance, if not a guarantee, that they are welcome and that they would be looked after. Meanwhile, confidence building measures could be undertaken by the State Government and the Centre, to motivate them. For other migrants, willing to return after checking for themselves at an appropriate time, and then move to the Valley, consideration be given to their numbers and their requirements. All these groups would need to be indoctrinated and well briefed, about the prevailing circumstances in the Valley and to take necessary precautions, before their departure and during their stay. As regards other migrants, outside the camps, many may hesitate

to wind up all their affairs and go to J&K State unless, they feel assured that the prevailing conditions are sympathetic for them. They may even want to maintain a facility outside the State, before going to the Valley, for safety to fall back upon, in an emergency. Others, who have already made up their minds not to return and are adequately settled outside Kashmir, they should be considered, for relief or rehabilitation, that such migrants generally receive. It would be necessary for the community, as well as the authorities concerned, to ensure, that the returnees do not have to go from door to door, for having their requirements met.

While not taking a negative view of the situation, should the return of the migrants to the Valley not materialize, due to any factor or they are unable to subsist in the Valley with their families, appropriate guidance and assistance must be available to them from the community and the Central Government for rehabilitating them in India, as the Punjab and other post-partition refugees, who suffered oppression. They could not be expected to go back to camps or live on footpaths in urban areas in India, for no fault of theirs. The decision for return of the migrants to the Valley, is difficult, as much depends on the conditions on ground in Kashmir and how stable these are. The recent developments, however, are ominous, but the right to return is vested in the migrants and shall remain so until redeemed by his return.

Coming to relief, there are by now, set regulations by the Governments of India/State as to what relief the migrants are receiving, but they should in all fairness be granted relief appropriate to the current times, according to the cost of living index. A follow up on the latest Government offerings, to make these realistic and adequate, would be necessary and simplified procedures for time to time must be adopted by the authorities for settlement of claims. It would be advisable to set up a "returnees association", supported by the two Governments to help look after them, and would best be served by representatives of different organizations or associations of the Pandits who are in touch with the returnees. It would be necessary to have this association as the sole body, which would pursue the aims and objects covering the return and conditions related thereto, and be recognised by the Government.

Rehabilitation has other aspects and vistas in education, health, housing and employment. Concrete steps must be taken by the Government in this regard, at its own level to estimate the needs and ways and means of rehabilitating the migrants and providing these essential facilities to them. The Pandits also have to realise that substantial responsibility devolves upon the shoulders of the community itself, to render guidance and aid. The community should wholeheartedly unite on this issue, for the benefit of the migrant families, achieving the objects and needs of the migrants for their *relief* and *rehabilitation*, of course with the help of the two governments (Central and State), the community itself and other philanthropic organizations, on a planned basis.

Matters relating to political, constitutional and other aspects of Kashmiri Pandits of the State, as to their representation on the legislatures and other bodies, the rights of minorities, the fundamental and human rights etc. are detailed in Chapter 9 of "The Wail of Kashmir" under the heading, "The Pandits' bane", and could be referred to, as a background view, too difficult to compress, in this note.

Similarly the 'Homeland' proposal has been commented upon, in terms of feasibility and viability, marked by the listing of the essential elements, with implications to be examined in the light of the topics therein. (Please see pages 202-203) of my book. The sponsors have to assure that the proposal is the only solution left, which could satisfy all the needs and hopes of the community.

Other matters recommended for general discussion are as follows:

Identity Crisis

(a) The identity crisis in the community has deepend by the dispersal of the members who migrated and had to face new living conditions. Unlike life in Kashmir being traditional and conservative, and with the serious impact of globalisation, our culture is under stress. With the decline in the Kashmir Pandits' total population, it would be difficult to preserve the heritage and retain this identity. Our unique and proud identity as a group, is under threat and we may lose our special characteristics - noteworthy and distinct - for ever. Apart from migration, the spate of our

boys' and girls' marriages outside the community, could hasten the process. Attention is therefore necessary to be given to this important issue of identity and ways and means of preserving the Kashmiri Pandits' heritage.

(b) *Social reforms* : It is never late to take a good turn, but time seems opportune, that the community forcefully introspects over some aspects of our way of life, and declare as taboo, wanton waste and unnecessary display in some of our customs. With the coming millennium, we could not be sure what forces gain supremacy in the future and how we could meet the challenges of those times. The workshop should examine the matter and recommend steps, in this direction.

Need for Unity

(c) Last, but not the least, let us discuss the imperative need for unity in the community, with open hearts and minds, without emotion, rancour and ego and agree to offer a united front to the challenges facing the community in distress. It is said that we are not united, on major issues and we offer as many views on minor matters, as are not based on real facts.

Our unity would strengthen our cause at the domestic and international levels, with overall benefit to the community, in the state, in India and internationally. Homer, has rightly said in his book *Iliad* that "Not vain the weakest, if their force unite". Therefore, even though we are weak in numbers, yet we can be strong if we unite.

CHAPTER 29

Our Future Well-being as a Community:

THE MESSAGE OF KASHMIRI SAINTS

*Prof. A.N. Dhar**

The planners of the present seminar have listed several concerns and issues for the participants to focus upon in regard to the plight of our displaced and scattered community. In my view, the following two crucial questions need to be urgently and seriously addressed :

(i) How do we retain our cultural identity?

(ii) How do we return to the valley and re-establish our presence there?

Let me straightway admit that it is not my intention, in this paper, to go into the prospects and possibilities of our early return to the valley and our resettlement there (except allude to this aspect towards the conclusion, inevitably bound up as it is with other important aspects). However, in keeping with the main title of the paper, I shall touch upon the first question - how to retain our cultural identity, which is vitally tied up with our future well-being as a community. When we talk about our cultural identity, it is incumbent upon us to spell out what the distinctive marks of a true Kashmiri Pandit are, on the basis of which he is recognized and identified as such. I propose to mention these marks briefly before I dwell on the question of our well-being in general. In that

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context I shall talk about our debt to the Kashmiri saints and how best we can profit from their message - that we have inherited from them as a rich legacy. If we try to learn from their precepts and practice, I believe we shall not only tide over the present crisis but also ensure our prosperous growth as a community with a proud legacy of our own.

Those of us who spent their early years as grown-up children in the Valley before India attained freedom from the British rule, will recall how most of our elders then were recognized as Pandits through the *tika* or *tilak* - the mark of vermillion or saffron - paste made on the forehead. Almost every family or house had a *Thokurkuth* (a small room meant for *puja*). Also, invariably, a good percentage of the old and middle-aged residing in a locality could be seen performing *sandhya* in the morning at the river-ghat or *yarbal*. Most of us - young and old - would bathe in the *Vitasta*. I am mentioning this to remind my brothers and sisters that all Kashmiri Pandits are *Saraswat Brahmins*, considered to be seekers of knowledge and wisdom, as true votaries of *Mother Sharada*. Though with the passage of years, we do not have now all the distinctive outward marks that the Kashmiri Pandits bore in the past, we still put the *tilak* as a mark on our foreheads on festive and sacred occasions. In the past half-century, our dress and food habits have changed appreciably, and inevitably too. Yet we are still recognized through our *Koshur*, which, unfortunately is gradually dwindling away! Our tiny tots do not pick it up as their mother tongue as they should, although they somehow retain the ability to understand it when spoken to in *Koshur*. In view of the *diaspora* - scattered now in the rest of the country outside the valley - we have no means of holding together as Kashmiris in the changed linguistic environs unless we retain our *Koshur*. If we don't keep it up, and if our children fail to communicate in it, the prospects of our holding on to our Kashmiri Pandit identity for long do not seem bright at all.

The other significant marks of our cultural identity, besides wearing the sacred thread as *dwijas* (twice-born), are some of our festivals like *Shiv Ratri* and *Navreh*, rituals like *shishur*, the *veug* as a sacred symbol and *Koshur vanavun* (songs sung at weddings, thread-ceremonies, *Mahanadi Rat* and *Devagon*) that we cannot discard as things of the past if we value the continuity of our culture.

We have a proud culture and spiritual heritage going back to the Vedic times, being the progeny of the great *Vedic rishis.* Once we recognize this ancestry of ours and realize that as enlightened human beings we should be aware of our innate divinity, we will find it within our means to tap our hidden sources of spiritual energy, overcome our difficulties and come out of our present state of depression. The Kashmiri saints are our guiding lights in the background, but we must not forget that the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* including the *Gita* are the main fountains of spiritual knowledge for us.

Yes, there is another stream of spiritual knowledge that continues to nourish us as the *Swarasat* Brahmins of Kashmir, I mean the pristine stream of knowledge that had virtually dried up for us and gone into oblivion until it was reclaimed as *Kashmir Shaivism* or *Trika* in the 9th century A.D. Thereafter the stream flowed afresh for us, thanks to *Vasugupta,* who was guided by Lord Shiva himself in a dream and consequently the *Shiva Sutras* were found inscribed on the *Shankarpal.*

Perhaps it is vitally important for me to stress that the *Trika* philosophy is not altogether different from *Vedanta.* It has to be said to the credit of the *Shaivite* Masters like *Utpal Dev, Abhinav Gupt* and others that they expounded spiritual truths in a distinct and novel way. They introduced the rigour of grammar and logic into the philosophy they propounded, giving evidence of their fine perception and rare insights. I do not claim any specialized knowledge of the Shaivite texts but, on the basis of my reading of some of the English translations of the principal texts, I have perceived that the two philosophies in question, in effect, complement and reinforce each other in spite of some points of difference between them. The two philosophies are essentially non-dualistic and both uphold man's divinity. The quintessence of the *Vedic* and *Shaivite* texts in the symbol *Aum* and the sacred/subtle *mantra* recommended by either philosophy is *soham* (uttered in the reverse form as *hamsa*). It is relevant to mention here that the Ishwar Swarup, Swami Laxman Joo, made the most significant and memorable contribution to the revival of *Shaivite* studies in Kashmir through his explication of the related texts during his life-term (in the century we have just left behind).

The *Shakta Marg* has also to be mentioned alongside *Shaivism* as far as our past practice as Kashmiri Pandits is concerned. *Shiva* and *Shakti* are one, inseparable as the bipolar aspects of *Ardanarishwara*. In actual fact, *Shaktivad* has influenced our community in a remarkable way. Most Kashmiri Pandits are basically worshippers of the *Divine Mother* - by whatever specific name we may choose to call her. That's why we continue to be distinguished clan-wise from one another on the basis of our *ishtadevis* : *Sharika, Ragnya, Zala,* etc. That also explains why Kashmiri Pandits attach special importance to the observance of *Ashtami* as a sacred day in the bright fortnight of every month. Even those who do not observe a fast at least remain strictly vegetarian on this *tithi* out of their reverence.

As *Shaivites* or as *Shaktas*, we owe a lot to the great *Shankaracharya*, who rehabilitated Hinduism in India. With his intellectual prowess and spiritual vigour, he was able to silence his Buddhist opponents in discussion. Hinduism found its feet as a result of his untiring efforts and again gained ascendancy in India. The Buddhists lost their stronghold in Kashmir too and Shankara's *advaita* philosophy based on *Vedanta* prevailed in the valley too. It is a pity that Shankara is not rightly understood by those who are critical of his advocacy of *sannyasa* as the means to God-realization. Though he himself opted for *sannyasa*, he proved himself to be a great *Karma Yogin* too; what he achieved as the preacher of *Vedanta* and as the founder of *Maths* has been really colossal. He was a dynamo of spiritual energy and his devotional verses in the *Saundarya Lahri* gives the lie to the view that he was unaware of the greatness of Mahashakti. When he maintained 'जगत मिथ्या ब्रहम सत्यं' he wanted to convey that the *One Brahman* is Real and the manifold appearances that characterize the "Jagat" (sensory world) are only fleeting phenomena. It is in this context that the relevance of the *Gita* as a scripture with a positive message for our saints and seers becomes evident. While upholding the value of *sannyasa* and its superiority over *Karma*, Shankara stresses that *Nishkam Karma Yoga* serves as the preparatory ground for *sannyasa* that leads to spiritual liberation. The *Gita*, however, lays the utmost stress on *Nishkam Karma Yoga* and, at the same time, doesn't extol external *sannyasa* :

अनाश्रित: कर्मफलं कार्यं कर्म करोतिय:।
स सन्यासी च योगी वन निरग्निर्नचाक्रय:।।

(Sloka 1, Chap 6, *Gita*)

[It is the man who performs his duties without dependence on the fruits that deserves to be called a Sanyasin (renouncer) and a Yogin, not the man who keeps no fire or avoids works.]

It is as much in keeping with this verse of the *Gita* as with the *Shaivite* path that our saints in Kashmir have generally not donned the *sannyasin's* robe and have preferred staying indoor as householders to living in Ashrams, hermitages and temples. Though many of them avoided marriage and remained *Brahamcharins* in earnest, they didn't dissociate themselves from household affairs. What is significant is that even as householders, many of our saints attained spiritual heights and some distinguished themselves as scholars, saint-poets and mystics.

Among our saint-poets, the name of the *Shivyogini Lalleshwari,* comes foremost to our minds. Her *vaakhs* are a rich store-house of spiritual and practical wisdom, which are known to have deeply impressed the popular imagination and *psyche* in Kashmir. Both Hindus and Muslims have cherished these verse-sayings as gospel truths; the *vaakhs* serve the serious spiritual aspirant as very useful keys to unlock divine truths and mysteries.

In our present state of despair and disillusionment, the message of Lalla should seve as a beacon - a real source of inspiration and strength. The hard life she chose for herself in renouncing the world, coerced as she was by her mother-in-law and husband, gives us an idea of the suffering she had to bear as a seeker of spiritual knowledge. She had the mind of a real researcher in the realm of divinity, being free from dogmas and superstitions. As a deep thinker and an earnest lover of Truth, she strove hard and did not falter in her resolve to realize union with the *Shiva* she adored. In our present plight, we have a lot to learn from this *vaakh* of Lalla :

क्याह करुँ पाऽच़ंन दऽहन तुँ काहन,
व्वरव्युन यथ लेजि यिम कऽरिथ गय।

साऽरी समुँहन यिथ रज़ि लमुँहन,
अदुँ क्याज़ि राविहे काहन गाव।।

[How should I deal with these fives, tens and elevens that have emptied this pot of its content? If all could come together and pull in one direction (the boatmen would be ferried across) why should the eleven masters have lost the cow?]

This *vaakh* conveys Lalla's perception of what is involved in yogic control of the mind - an awareness of the need to arrest its waywardness and thereby achieve full concentration. Reading the *vaakh* at another level of significance, we derive a practical lesson from it too having a bearing on our social behaviour : that it is desirable for us to stand united and conduct ourselves as a closely-knit community, pursue our goals with single-mindedness and not speak in "multiple" voices.

Let us consider another *vaakh* of Lalla; its message has an earnest tone. Lalla exhorts us to wake up to the spiritual Reality, abjure falsehood and recognize the true self, distancing ourselves mentally from what is alien to it :

हा च्यता कवुँ छुय लोगमुत परमस,
कवुँ गोय अपुँज़िस पज़्युक ब्रोंत।
दुशि बोज़ कोरनस वश परधरमस,
यिनुँ गछ़नुँ ज़्यनुँ मरनस क्रोंत।।

[O mind, why are you drawn towards objects not akin to yourself,
Mistaking the false for the true?
Poor understanding has made you attached,
Thus subject to cycle of births and deaths.]

The study of Lalla *vaakh* can do the much-wronged Kashmiri Pandit community immense good in terms of *parmarth* (spiritual attainment) and also in mundane pursuits. Some audio-cassettes of Lalla's verse-sayings, sung melodiously, are now available at places like Jammu, Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta, etc; so the elders in a KP family can kindle children's interest in listening to the recorded *vaakhs* and grasping their content as they grow. This is the best way of keeping Lalla's memory alive, thus maintaining

our contact with what is *Koshur* at its best and paying our homage to Lalla, the great Mother of Kashmiri and of Kashmiri poetry.

Roopa Bhavani, whom we regard as an incarnation of the Goddess *Sharika*, has also bequeathed to us a rich treasure of her sayings that have been compiled and published at the *Rahasyopadesh*. She has not been much written upon, not as much as Lalla has been. A few English and Hindi renderings of the *Rahasyopadesh* have been published along with commentaries on the *vakyas* (Shri Triloki Nath Dhar's book on the *Bhavani* being lauadable as a pioneering study). I must concede that the reader has difficulties in understanding Roopa Bhavani's language straight because her diction is a curious blend of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic etc. and the Kashmiri spoken in her time (17th-18th century A.D.). Since we cannot afford to be ignorant of the rich content of the *vakyas*, we must study them at any rate. Though Roopa Bhavani considered Madhao Dhar, who was her father, as her Guru, she calls Lalla her 'Param Guru'. In line with Lalla, her *vakyas* are the spontaneous utternaces of an advanced illumined soul. These *vakyas* straightway throw back to the *Vedantic* and *Shaivite* lore as Lalla *vaakh* does. How enlightened she was as a *yogini*, having a deep grasp of spiritual truths, becomes immediately evident as wė ponder the meaning of her *vakyas*; the two initial verses of the *Rahasyopdesh* are given below as illustrative examples (followed immediately by their English translation) :

(i) सहस्र सर्वत्र व्यापी स्वहथ विचारयम
बहुबल संबाहु एकतं स्वयंब परमाकारी।
अन्तर्मुखी दृषृी निर्वान रहस्य तती परमुँ गती।।

Infinite, Omnipresent, self-effulgent, All Powerful;
Everywhere in the entirety of the universe;
One without a second, unique, unequalled;
His form supreme and incomparable,
Inward-directed vision is the secret of salvation
and leads to higher realization.

(ii) शुद्ध युत्त मूलादारी क्वराडली, गराडली गौरी,
स्यद्ध अर्थ सूक्षमू सुष्वप्ती चक्रः विरत्त शान्तादारी।
ईश्वरी तुर्यातीत परमानन्दी।
अन्तर्मुखी दृष्टी निर्वान-रहस्य तती परमुँगती।।

[Zone of Purity is Muladhara,
Great Kundalini is at Muladhara,
Seated within the orb of Kundalini is Gouri
(in its coils lies the spell of bondage)
For obtaining right comprehension of sushafti
And the state of Turyateeta,
Great Kundalini has to be awakened;
Subtle is sushafti, but Turyateeta
Is all powerful,
Supremely blissful,
Devoid of cycles,
Embodying peace;
Inward vision is the secret of Nirvana
And leads to the ultimate state of Realization]

(Tr. Triloki Nath Dhar)

Alongside Lal Ded and Roopa Bhavani, I must mention Nunda Rishi in particular (hailed by Muslims as Sheikh Noor-ud-Din too) as a saint who deserves very special attention. He was a younger contemporary of Lal Ded, who, according to the legend widely accepted, breastfed the former as a babe when it had refused to suckle its mother. Lalla's kindly gesture only signified that the new-born was an extra-ordinary child that would grow up to be a great saint. Hailed also as *Sheikh-ul-Alam* by the Muslims in Kashmir and *Sahazanand* by the Kashmiri Pandits, the Sheikh too, like Lal Ded, endeared himself to the Kashmiris - Muslims and Hindus alike - through his great qualities as a saint. The Rishi-cult followed by a succession of Muslim saints in Kashmir is directly linked with Nunda Rishi. The cult is noted for its strong affinities with the Rishi way of life practised by the Kashmiri Hindu saints in the distant past before the spread of Islam. Nunda Rishi is venerated to this day by the Kashmiri Pandits, the reason being that his *shrukhs,* comparable to Lalla *vaakh,* too have become household sayings for them. Having lived all his life like a *Rishi* and *sannyasi* he is venerated for his deep wisdom and for the other saintly qualities he was an embodiment of - his purity, penance and morality. Those who talk of the Kashmiri *ethos* having been marked by peace and amity affirm this mainly on the basis of whatever impact Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi have made on the saner section of society in Kashmir through their sayings.

Nunda Rishi, exhorting his followers to perform good deeds - which, in his view, is the secret of success in life (here and hereafter) - says as under :

(i) आगँन नाद करान हूनू,
बनायो में कन तोह्य शुनितव।
यऽम्य ये'ति वो'वुय तऽम्य तति लून,
हून छु करान वव बा वव।।

The dog is barking in the courtyard, conveying :
"O Brothers, pay heed to me;
He who sows here reaps there (in the other world),
The dog's bark means - sow here and reap there".

(ii) कुनिरय बोज़ख कुनिनो रोज़ख,
अऽम्य कुनिरन कोताह द्युत जलाव।
अकुॅल तुँ फिकिर तोर को'त सोज़ख,
कऽम्य मालि च्यथ ह्यौक सु दऽरियाव।।

If you live in oneness, you'll lose your identity,
Behold how the one shines out bright;
Neither your intellect nor mind can comprehend that,
Who could drink that deep stream, my dear?

The other notable poets who deserve to be mentioned in this paper are Parmanand and Krishna Joo Razdan. In view of the prescribed length of this paper, I cannot take up any of their verses for discussion. Suffice it to say that as *bhakti* (devotional) poets, they rank supreme as great Masters. Their divine lyrics are a unique contribution to our rich spiritual and cultural heritage. However, I shall quote a couple of verses each from the later poets Zinda Kaul (Masterji) and Swami Govind Kaul (of Vanpoh) to show how they developed individual styles of their own and yet followed the tradition of devotional poetry that was enriched by the two Masters Parmanand and Krishan Joo Razdan.

(i) दिल फुटिमत्यन छु तोशन,
यऽच् गऽरिमत्यन छु रोशन।

गछ़ वऽरिमत्यन सो'दामन,
पृछ़ गाऽयबानुँ वे'सिये।।

('प्रेमुक निशॉनु' 'Token of Love' SMARAN, Part I)

He is kind and considerate to the repentant,
Though he pretends to be displeased with the clever sort;
Go and confirm this aside from
Devotees like Sudama, whom He favoured.

(Zinda Kaul's own process - translation
in the free-verse form attempted by me).

(ii) अऽन्द्य पऽक्ष तऽती छु आसन,
बो'दु ब्रोर सूर दासन।
बोज़ान छु माय लाऽगिथ,
लोलुक तरानुँ वे'सिये।।

('प्रेमुक निशॉनु' 'Token of Love' SMARAN, Part I)

The Omniscient child divine,
Stays quietly around watching closely
His devotees like Surdas;
Unobtrusively, he listens to the song of
loving devotion.

(Zinda Kaul's own prose - translation
in the free-verse form attempted by me).

(iii) क्याज़ि छ़ाँडान न्यबर चुहिये,
मनुँ सुँयं मंज़ पानय छुय।
मन साऽरवी यस लाग हिय फौती,
माऽर्य मऽती हय तबुँलोवुस।।

(From 'निरमल ब्वद कर कर मे सरस्वती'
included in *Govind Amrit*)

Why are you looking for the Jasmines outside?
The plant is rooted in your mind,
That bears witness to the Lord
You should adore with basketfuls of jasmines;
That very ardent lover has deprived me of rest

(Translation mine)

(ii) गरे दय लौबुख तिमय गऽय सादुँय
दमुँ दमुँ दमुँनुँय सूत्यन दम सह ।
ब्रम चऽलिथ पथ छु सूहम दम सह,
खसु वसुँ दम करान यी समादुँय।।

(From Govind Kaul's
'सतचित आनन्द अखंड' *Govind Amrit*)

They're the saints who found God at home (in themselves),
Restraining their breath every moment,
Overcame the illusion (of duality),
Inhaling and exhaling - breath moving up and down,
Conversed with God (the indwelling self)

(Translation mine)

It is a matter of pride for us that with illustrious saint-poets such as Lal Ded, Roopa Bhavani and Arnimal in the background, several other successive women poets have made a mark for themselves in the field of sacred poetry in our own time. In this connection I must specially mention the *vaakhs* of रुँच द्यद, that have already been published posthumously, Bimla Raina's *Reshi Malyun Myon* and Bhavani (Bagyavan) Pandit's *Mana Pamposh*, both published during the last two years, brought out in *Nagri* and *Nastalik* scripts. The published works of Bimla Raina and Bhavani Pandit are new landmarks in their own right. The achievement of these two women poets kindles in us hopes of the survival and rejuvenation of our age-old religio-cultural heritage.

The present seminar has also to consider the question of creating cultural centres of our community all over the globe. Though this seems an ambitious programme, the new means of communication and dissemination of information available today including internet facilities (to be provided at the centres in question), the whole project can be implemented in a phased manner over a period of time. As a positive outcome of our displacement from the valley, a number of our cultural centres have already sprung up in the country. In my view the following three centres deserve special mention:

(i) Ashrams associated with the Bhagavaan Gopinathji Trust - at Srinagar, Jammu, Pamposh Enclave, New Delhi and Bangalore.

(ii) Ashrams linked with Swami Laxman Joo at Ishber, Srinagar, Jammu and New Delhi and

(iii) Nityanand Institute at New Delhi

At these religio-cultural centres, publications in the shape of books, and journals namely *Patrika*, *Malini* and the Newsletter titled *Unmesh* (as the precursor of the the proposed research journal *Spand*) are being brought out periodically. It is for the participants at the seminar here to suggest how the available centres in the country can be activised as a step forward towards the establishment of our cultural centres abroad.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the Kashmiri Pandits, as their past history bears out, have always been forward-looking, not past-ridden but with an awareness of their roots and a progressive outlook. I do not mean to say that we are flawless; but we certainly have had a glorious past - in terms of our cultural refinement and a sense of values - as well as a chequered history, marked by ups and downs. Though wronged and uprooted several times, we have somehow withstood onslaughts in spite of having shrunk to a small community of about a million Pandits . and have maintained our cultural identity. The Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society (KECSS), New Delhi, seems the right forum to conduct the present seminar and provide a guide-line to our community as to how to forge ahead in the years to come. As an ethnic group of *Saraswat* Brahmins, Kashmiri Pandits must take all knowledge to be their province. Fortunately, we generally do not see a clash between science and spirituality as distinguished from organized religion. The windows of our minds must continue to be open to all kinds of positive "winds" to ensure our all-round growth in the fields of education, science, religion, philosophy and culture.

Finally, the question of our retaining our cultural identity is vitally tied up with our own native ability to use *Koshur* - our progeny should be able to read, write and speak in Kashmiri. If this seems a difficult proposition, then it is sheer tall talk on our

part to say that we will hold together as a community long enough. The best guarantee for our retaining *Koshur* is our safe and honourable return to the valley in which we are still rooted emotionally. We have to regain our home, the "lost paradise" that still haunts us in our dreams. How this dream of ours can be fulfilled is a big question, when we consider the conditions still prevailing in the valley. In order to remain in-tact as an ethnic group, we have to regain our foothold in the valley under such conditions that not only our survival is possible there but also our growth and prosperity as free citizens under whatever dispensation. So far our return to the valley and resettlement there have altogehter eluded us. We must be back in the valley as the masters of our own destiny.

In all our future endeavours for the well-being of our community as a whole, we need to bear the message of our great saints in our minds - to strive for noble ends and vigorously pursue programmes aimed at our rehabilitation and cultural resurgence with courage and determination. I would like to remind my brothers here of how highly Jagad Guru Bhagavan Gopinathji spoke of the virtues of *sezar, pazar and shozar* (straight-forwardness, truth and purity). God will surely come to our rescue and lift us out of the present crisis if we cultivate the virtues that Bab Maharaj often praised and actually embodied in himself throughout.

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past 10 years that we will [illegible] community. Accordingly, the best guarantee for [illegible] is our safe and honourable return to the valley in which we are still rooted emotionally. We have to regain our home, the "lost paradise" that still haunts us in our dreams. How this dream of ours can be fulfilled is a big question, when we consider the conditions still prevailing in the valley. In order to survive as an ethnic group, we have to regain our foothold in the valley under such conditions that not only [illegible] possible the [illegible] our safety and prosperity as [illegible] opportunities for our return to the valley and resettlement there have [illegible]. We must be back in the valley as the masters of our own destiny.

In all our future endeavours for the well-being of our community as a whole, we need to hear the message of our great saints in [illegible] to strive for [illegible] and [illegible] pursue [illegible] with courage and determination. I would like to [illegible] people here at [illegible] highly [illegible] spoke of the virtues of [illegible] truth and purity [illegible] will surely come to our rescue and lift us out of the present crisis if we cultivate the virtues that [illegible] often praised and actually embodied in himself throughout [illegible].

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PART - VI

THE OPEN FORUM AND THE SEMINAR CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 30

Open Forum Discussions

Dr. (Mrs.) Veena Ganju

The seminar provided an opportunity for some scholars and participants to present their views in an open forum on the subject of future of Kashmiri Pandits. These scholars did not have time to present written papers as done by others which have been included in the proceedings.

Prominent speakers in the open forum included Prof. T.N. Madan, Dr. (Mrs.) Shakti Bhan, Vice-president Kashmiri Samiti, Prof. A.K. Kalla, Professor of Anthropology, Delhi University, Shri S.L. Shakdhar, formerly Chief Election Commissioner of India, Prof. S.L. Pandit, the renowned Professor of English and scholar on Kashmir affairs, Dr. S.S. Toshkhani, an eminent scholar on Kashmiri literature, and Shri S.J. Raina.

Professor T.N. Madan is a scholar and sociologist of international repute. He was also formerly the Director of the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi University. Professor Madan felt that to study the future course of Kashmiri Pandits, we need to look to the history of this great community. He referred to the book written by Pandit Anand Kaul entitled "The Kashmiri Pandit" which gives a good glimpse of the background of Kashmiri Pandits. He said he had carried a social survey of Kashmiri Pandits in the villages of Kashmir and found that not many women were educated. During the Sikh and Dogra rule in Kashmir, Kashmiri Pandits remained a clerical class, he said. They did not get opportunities for other professions like the army and police. After

independence in 1947, Kashmiri Pandits in particular did not have opportunity to develop and consolidate their culture. With the exodus from Kashmir in recent years, Prof. Madan felt that we should now take stock of our cultural heritage and take steps to protect it. He suggested that marriages should be confined within the community only. Besides, Kashmiri language should be promoted.

Many readers may like to know that Prof. Madan has made a scholarly study of Kashmiri Pandit culture in his book "Non-Renunciation : Themes and Interpretation of Hindu Culture", published by Oxford University Press in 1987. In this book Prof. Madan conducts detailed study of a Kashmiri Pandit house-holder. He feels that there is a complementary relationship between the renouncer and the house-holder. Therefore Kashmiri Pandit ethos even to this day is based on this harmonious blending of mystic and social life of a Kashmiri Pandit.

Dr. (Mrs.) Shakti Bhan, and a well-known gynaecologist, spoke about the role of Kashmiri women in the making of our future society. She felt women should be given more opportunity to shape the future. She made a plea for a social organisation of Kashmiri Pandit womenfolk which would help to protect our cultural heritage.

Prof. A.K. Kalla, Professor of Anthropology, spoke at length on the subject of integration of older and younger generations of Kashmiri Pandits who have migrated out of Kashmir. Though some marriages do take place between the 'old' and 'new' Kashmiris, Prof. Kalla feels that greater social interaction is needed to integrate the two generations. Indeed, if there is a reform movement among Kashmiri Pandits, there must be an integration of all generations who have left Kashmir or are still living in Kashmir.

Shri S.L. Shakdhar recalled how a Kashmiri Pandit name was a passport for success in life. He referred to Shri Jawaharlal Nehru who was referred to as Panditji. Because, as Shri Shakdhar said, Kashmiri Pandit is an educated, knowledgeable human being with many noble values. He warned, however, that we must cooperate together to make progress possible. He was keen that in Pamposh Enclave we should have an academic centre, apart from the school etc.

Professor S.L. Pandit spoke briefly as he was to submit a paper which he did after the seminar. He was keen that all the participants of this important seminar should promote the wisdom of Kashmir. Kashmir is known for its secularism, Kashmiriat, harmony and for common brotherhood of mankind. Kashmir has set an example for secularism during the partition of India in 1947. Prof. Pandit felt that Kashmir will lead again in creating peace and harmony in the country.

Dr. S.S. Toshkhani spoke on the need to revive our interest in the history of Kashmiri literature. Sharda language was very popular in Kashmir's history and this language has many Kashmiri words. He made a strong case for the revival of Kashmiri Pandit heritage. He wants to develop a new creative approach to the understanding of our scriptures and spiritual philosophies like Shaivism which are now being compared to scientific philosophies by leading savants in the West. Paul Muller for example feels that Shaivism has parallels in physics as well:

Towards the end, Shri S.J. Raina said that Kashmiri Pandit community should be strong and should plan for future action with due cooperation among all members of this intellectual society. There was need to create centres of excellence, he said.

CHAPTER 31

One Step Backward Two Steps Forward
- Seminar Summary -

*Dr. Gita Bamezai**

The Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society (KECSS) organized a day long seminar on *Kashmiri Pandits: Looking Ahead* on March 12, 2000. The seminar brought together eminent personalities in the firmament of academic, literature and other fields. It was an occasion to reiterate our affirmation in looking ahead with optimism to the future and simultaneously placing our faith in our traditions and culture. This may appear paradoxical. Each speaker, however, clearly elucidated his/her ideas of what the future should hold for Kashmiri Pandits and, especially for the children and the youth of the community who may have to be initiated into the traditional values and ideas at the same time. For doing this the best way would be to nurture the language which could work as a bonding and be the via media to return to the 'lost world' and encourage cultural and literary initiatives at different levels in the Kashmiri society. The seminar provided a platform for variety of views but all the presentations could be broadly assessed in terms of their focus. — one set of papers dealt with plans of action which are already on the anvil and the other set of presentations laid out concrete steps for building a momentum of action to stem the tide of despair.

Among the first set of presentations important proposals laid out for action were -

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- Establishment of a council for the promotion of the Kashmiri language and establishing the headquarters at Pamposh Enclave, New Delhi.

- Project to compile a volume on eminent Kashmiris and their seminal contributions.

- Proposal to set up a Review Group comprising of eminent persons who would review the turbulent developments leading to the present impasse and provide a set of feasible guidelines for actions which could be taken up by the state and the central governments and other authorities for restoration of Kashmiri Pandits' rights and dignity.

- Equally important was to deal with the present crisis of displaced Kashmiris living in the camps in Jammu, Udhampur and Delhi and scattered elsewhere in the country. A single window approach for provision of information and help should be established. Equally important was to cater to the confidence building measures for displaced Kashmiris.

- The demographic imbalance evident in dwindling population threatens to reduce Kashmiri Pandits to almost an extinction status unless immediate steps were taken. One such step could be to register all Kashmiri Pandits as an ethnic religious minority and invite government attention and concern in a more concerted manner.

- Kashmiri Pandit youth could find opportunities in the armed forces.

- On the cultural front, organisation of regular events and gatherings where young men and women as well could come together for the task of nuturing the arts and music and also a platform to exchange ideas and exhibit talent.

- Formation of an advocacy group with certain set tasks and a time frame to achieve them.

- A global reform movement among KPs for unity, brotherhood and identity.

The second set of papers at the seminar, in an evocative fashion, raised issues which were centered around philosophical questions but did not lack in fervour or meaning. These enumerated on issues of identity crisis and the need to cast cultural settings in a different mould. The issues of language inspired many to make an emotional appeal for regaining the lost pride and seeking intervention at the individual and the community level.

The day long seminar was spread over four sessions, which also included an open session. Each session was chaired by eminent Kashmiris like Mr. S.L. Shakdhar, Mr. J.N. Kaul, Mr. D.N. Munshi, Mr. M.K. Kaw and Pt. Gautam Kaul. Making a departure from the established practices, the plenary session of the seminar in the morning opened with a Kashmiri song sung by a young and budding classical singer, Ms. Sapna Raina, a Ph.D. student of classical music at the University of Delhi. The tenor and tone of the seminar was set by the keynote address of the President of KECSS, Shri M.K. Kaw who exhorted that the spirit of optimism should mark all perspectives of looking ahead. Putting it in an evocative manner, Mr. Kaw emphasized that Kashmiri Pandits were 'God's chosen few' who needed to throw off the mantle of apathy and ennui and 'build a community of mutual help since tomorrow belongs to Kashmiris'. Moral and spiritual values of Vedanta would be the hallmark of the new world order of the 21st century in which Kashmiris would play a significant role. This role could be moulded on what *Lalleshwari* described as '*samooya Rozun*' i.e. 'living in the present moment uncluttered by the past conditioning, as living in the dynamic awareness of reality as it confronts us from moment to moment, as living a life of honesty, integrity, compassion, truth, non-violence, peace, dharma and love, as living more for others than for oneself, as serving the poor, the needy, the less fortunate'. Like a clairvoyant, Mr. Kaw spoke of the future which lay in going back to Kashmir as the true inheritors of the promised land, with a long-term strategy and vision. He urged the need to rework on coordinating all disparate efforts under the umbrella of the All India Kashmiri Samaj to ensure consistent and concrete results.

Earlier in the day, Prof. B.B. Dhar, the Vice-President of KECSS welcomed the participants and thanked them for their overwhelming response. He assured that the Society would work

towards certain common goals in partnership another with academicians, writers, thinkers and activists. Prof. S. Bhatt, Vice-President of KECSS, gave an over-view of the day-long seminar and outlined the efforts of reviving interest in the cultural heritage by organizing series of seminars through the year, especially on the Kashmiri cultural heritage to be conducted by Dr. Toshakhani and the other by Prof. T.N. Madan on studies on history of Kashmir. Mr. M.L. Bhatt, in his characteristic style, extended the vote of thanks to all those present at the seminar for participating in the '*mahayagna*' and urged them to subordinate personal interests to the 'nar *yagna*' i.e. the public good.

The issue of Kashmiri identity posed some interesting points of view, which came up in the subsequent sessions during the day. Endorsing the earlier refrain of optimism of the plenary session, the speakers of these sessions also spoke of assuming a new mantle and shedding passivity. There was a need to cultivate new symbols of cultural identity which were not moribund rituals but extended to the frontiers of music, arts and literature as well. The three axis of language, history and culture could give us a momentum and propel us forward as a community. Language needs numbers (of people) who could use it to sustain its growth and richness. The issue of no proper script for the Kashmiri language could not be the only handicap. The more fundamental problem was that we were not using it for intellectual discussion as vigorously as for religious discourses. *Koshur Samachar* was one such effort to promote interest in the language and literary interests alike by giving a platform to all sections of the society-young and old. There was a time when Kashmiri scholars travelled overseas in ancient times to popularize Buddhism and Kashmiris were known far and wide for their distinct intellectual acumen. Our interest in our history had also suffered from lack of interest and curiosity since more often than not, analysis was based on conjecture than on evidence. Our ancient monuments have been desecrated, but there has been no attempt to compile a documentary evidence of our rich past. There was a need to invite attention of the restorers and historians to salvage the situation.

The mystical powers inherent in the personalities of Kashmiri saints could lead us out of the present crisis and ensure prosperous growth as a community. Extolling the virtues *of Sezar,*

Pazar and Shozar (straightforwardness, truth and purity) as espoused by Jagad Guru Bhagwan Gopinath, it was suggested by Prof. A.N. Dhar that these were more relevant today for giving us a sense of direction and purpose. The philosophy of Shaivism which enriched Kashmiri society had a message for the people of the world as well. Not to be discarded to the realm of theology alone, Shavisim as a philosophical thought needed to be propagated in an easy language to create a resurgent Kashmiri samaj. Large-scale cultural movement to resurrect past glory would have to be taken up at different levels. The religio-cultural centers like *Hari Parbat* and *Khir Bhavani* had provided a platform to conduct cultural activities as well, a destination for all Kashmiris. Today there is a dilution of our identity, which has been exacerbated by the large-scale exodus and also by other factors. Our dietary habits and fasting rituals have come under such influence that from non-vegetarian community we have started becoming strict vegetarians and our fasting on Shivratri is being replaced by fasting for Santoshi Ma!

Likewise, our constricted approach in defining our priorities for career and advancement options should give way to more dynamic and technology friendly possibilities. In recent times trend towards skill-oriented and entrepreneurship ventures, so far unknown to us, was an indication of our resilience to withstand the vicissitudes of times. Part of this process of identity search also entailed 'burying the hatchet' of past differences and forging a united front. The leadership should constitute of men who had elements of selflessness and empathy to bring different shades of opinion together without rancour or acrimony. In setting our house in order we had to dispense with the wasteful expenditure and ostentatious display of wealth.

Prominent speakers who spoke and presented theii scintillating ideas at this seminar were eminent scholars like Prof. T.N. Madan, Prof. A.N. Dhar, Prof. S.L. Pandit, Dr. S.S. Toshakhani, Prof. S. Bhatt and Prof. K.Warikoo. Important writers and activists who spoke at the seminar were Mr. D.N. Kaul, Mr. D.N. Munshi, Mr. A.N. Kaul, Mr. Virendra Qazi, Mr. S.N. Bhatt (Haleem), Mr. A.K. Kaul, Dr. Shakti Bhan, Mr. C.L.Gadoo, Mr. Utpal Kaul, Mr. T.N. Dhar (Kundan). The seminar came to an end in the late hours of the evening, which culminated with the vote of thanks proposed by Prof. Ramesh Bamezai.

CHAPTER 32

Concluding Remarks

Prof. S. Bhatt

The concluding session of the seminar was chaired by Mr. J.N. Kaul, President of All India Kashmiri Samaj as also partly by Pandit Gautam Kaul, until last year the President of Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society.

It may be recalled that Mr. J.N. Kaul has rendered outstanding services to the Kashmiri Pandit community, especially during the past decade ever since the community was forced to leave Kashmir by militant forces inspired from across the border. Mr. Kaul has helped migrant Kashmiris in the refugee camps at Jammu and elsewhere, provided them jobs, helped them in getting admission in training institutions. Above all, he has created an educational school in Faridabad and is constructing a huge Sharika temple in this town. He has been instrumental in building a new Hari Parbat on a hill in Faridabad, a great monument indeed which compares well with the Hari Parbat in Srinagar, Kashmir. This temple has become a big pilgrimage centre for all Kashmiri Pandits living in the National Capital Region of Delhi on Navreh and on other festivals. Hawans performed here are attended by a large number of Kashmiri Pandits. The villagers around this Hari Parbat worship this temple as Mata's Temple. At times thousands attend the prayers in this new historic place.

It was in this backdrop that Mr. J.N. Kaul spoke in the seminar with some experience of his dedicated social service to the community. He also had strong feelings to express about the shortcomings among our members.

Mr. Kaul said that Kashmiri Pandits must go to their roots. However, remembering the past, he said it was good but, he emphasized, that we must live in the present and work for a brighter future. He felt sorry that we have not created sense of pride for our outstanding culture among our children. He was very happy to see the gathering at the seminar and felt that we should have more often such meetings in order to study our culture and social problems.

Mr. Kaul cautioned that in general, Kashmiri Pandits are too individualistic and do not care for the general interests of the community. He recommended that more people should devote time for social causes. He outlined some common interests of the community such as opening of banks, providing funds for education of our brilliant students, donating liberally for social and educational causes, and improving our places of settlement in all respects. There was need to work hard to develop social and educational institutions for which we pray to Maa Sharda to give us strength to achieve these social goals of society.

Mr. B.L. Kaul Chaman, art historian, spoke briefly about the widespread destruction of ancient archaeological sites in Kashmir. Martand temple in Kashmir in particular has been destroyed at least four times in history, he said. He made a strong plea that these ancient monuments in Kashmir that speak of great Hindu heritage must be preserved for posterity. He also strongly advocated that we must preserve our old manuscripts, now lying in bad shape.

Pandit Gautam Kaul, presently Director General, Indo-Tibetan Border Force, gave a security scenario of Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir. He said that cross-border terrorism in Kashmir had made it difficult for the Kashmiri Pandits to return at an early date to their homes in Kashmir. He recalled feelingly how, long ago, his generation of Kashmiri Pandits had migrated from Kashmir in the year 1705 because of security problems and settled in various mohallas in Delhi, Allahabad, Gwalior, Jaipur and Lucknow. Being scholars of the Persian language, the Pandits of that generation took up jobs in the government outside Kashmir and became prosperous. He felt that Kashmiri language cannot survive easily. However, all Kashmiri Pandits of old generations

have preserved Kashmiri culture even to this day. He suggested that all Kashmiri Pandits should be realistic and face the modern world with fortitude and courage.

Dr. T.N. Pandit, well-known anthropologist, spoke about the unique cultural heritage of Kashmiri Pandits. Kashmiri Pandit culture, he said, has much flexibility and adjustment. Therefore, we shall overcome the present challenges and for this, hard work was needed.

Towards the end, Professor Ramesh Bamezai, Professor of Life Sciences at Jawaharlal Nehru University, presented a vote of thanks. He paid tributes to Mr.M.K. Kaw and other distinguished members present for their scholarly deliberations. He thanked the KECSS members for the excellent arrangements made for the seminar.

The seminar ended on a solemn note and awareness that the deliberations represented in this book will guide and inspire the Kashmiri Pandit community for all times to look towards unity and progress in the 21st century. The participants felt that the great ancestors of this community, mostly saints and sages from Kashmir, will provide direction to all Kashmiri Pandits to make a glorious contribution to this civilisation in all spheres of human endeavour, including mysticism, science and philosophy, involved in new areas of research.

have preserved Kashmiri culture even in this era. He suggested that all Kashmiri Pandits should be encouraged to face the modern world with fortitude and courage.

Dr. Hari Pandit, well known anthropologist, spoke about the unique cultural heritage of Kashmiri Pandits. Kashmiri Pandit culture, he said, has the adaptability and uniqueness. Therefore, we shall overcome the present challenges and for this, hard work was needed.

Towards the end, Dr. [illegible], Professor of [illegible] at Jawaharlal Nehru University, proposed a vote of thanks. He paid tributes to Mr. [illegible] and other [illegible] members present for their [illegible]. He thanked the KPCSS [illegible] for the [illegible] seminar.

The seminar ended on a sombre note and a hope that the deliberations presented in this book will guide and inspire the Kashmiri Pandit community for all times to seek unity and progress in the Millennium. The participants felt that the great ancestors had [illegible] would provide direction to all Kashmiri Pandits to make a glorious contribution to the [illegible] in all spheres of human endeavour, in individual [illegible], science and other [illegible] areas of research.

Index

C

D

E

F

T

U

Maharaj Krishen Kaw is the President of the Kashmir Education, Culture and Science Society (KECSS). He is an outstanding civil servant who is currently Secretary (Secondary & Higher Education) in the Government of India. He is the author of 14 books and the President of Poetry Society (India).

Professor Saligram Bhatt is Vice-President of the KECSS. He is a prominent scholar who is currently an Honorary Professor of JNU and Hamdard University, New Delhi. He has been a Professor of Space Law in JNU, an Adviser to the ICAO and a DDG of Civil Aviation. Author and Editor of 15 books, he has been Editor-in-Chief of Koshur Samachar.

Prof. B.B. Dhar is Vice-President of the KECSS and is currently Director (Research) in the Association of Indian Universities. Earlier he has been Professor and HOD of Mining, BHU and headed the CSIR Mining Institute at Dhanbad. He has authored several books and is widely travelled.

Shri. A.N. Kaul is presently Editor-in-Chief of Koshur Samachar, the chief organ of the Kashmiri Samiti, New Delhi. He is a former Director of the Parliament Library Research and Information Service. He is a prolific writer, thinker and social activist, who has played a critical role in Kashmiri affairs of the national capital.

Dr. (Mrs.) Gita Bamezai is Associate Professor, National Institute of Health, New Delhi. She is a sociologist and has immense interest in the cultural heritage of Kashmir. She is a versatile writer and scholar, and has widely travelled in India and abroad.

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